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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the single 2002 issue of The Bernard van Leer Foundation's "Early Childhood Matters," a periodical addressed to practitioners in the field of early childhood education and including information on projects funded by the Foundation. Articles in this issue focus on early childhood development tracer studies of former participants in early childhood programs, addressing theory and practice, reflection and planning, methodology, findings, and policy and programming. The articles include: (1) "Following Footsteps: ECD Tracer Studies" (Jim Smale); (2) "Tracer Studies: An Opportunity and a Challenge" (David P. Weikart); (3) "The Story Behind the Story: Tracing San Children in Botswana" (Willemien le Roux and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe); (4) "Tracer Studies and the Caribbean Support Initiative" (Susan Branker); (5) "Family Support Programmes" (Ann S. Epstein, Jeanne Montie, and David P. Weikart); (6) "Gender Differences in Personality Development" (Anne Njenga and Margaret Kabiru); and (7) "The Implications of Tracer Studies for Programme Development" (Henriette Heimgaertner). The issue includes information on Foundation publications and announcements related to Foundation activities. (HTH)

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Following footsteps: ECD tracer studies

Early Childhood Matters

the bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation

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Cover: Kenya *Standard 1 girls in Embu district centre for ECE*
photo: Mwana Mwende project
Inside front cover: Trinidad & Tobago *Girl sharing a secret*
photo: Servol
Back cover: Poster Competition 2002
photo: M Muthu

As well as *Early Childhood Matters* the Foundation produces a wide range of publications about early childhood development. All are available - free of charge for single copies - to organisations or individuals interested in this field. A publications list is also available: please contact the Foundation at the addresses above and on the back cover.

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Following Footsteps: ECD tracer studies

What happens to people after they have been in an early childhood programme? Is a child different at the age of 10 because she was in a programme when she was four and five years old? Does a 12 year old benefit because his mother was in a parenting programme when she was an adolescent? Do people really change because they participated as parents, or were trained to work as caregivers, in an ECD programme?

To help answer these kinds of questions, the Bernard van Leer Foundation launched a programme of tracer studies in 1998 to follow the footsteps of former participants in early childhood programmes, five or more years on, and find out what had happened to them. This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* is about these tracer studies, and reviews their nature, what they can do, and how their approaches, methodologies and findings fit with more formal investigations. It has been put together by Ruth N Cohen, Senior Programme Specialist at the Foundation, who is the coordinator of the studies.

The tracer studies presented in this edition include those of past participants in a range of projects, many of them supported by the Foundation – a complete list of those completed so far can be found on page 14. Although each is distinct from the others, most share a number of common characteristics:

- they follow up the progress of the children, their families, programme staff, the communities or the organisations, five or more years after they participated, to find out how they are faring;
- they are generally small in scale (tens rather than hundreds of respondents) and short in duration (months rather than years);
- they are qualitative rather than quantitative in nature;
- each is designed locally and overall control is in the hands of the programmes, even when the study is undertaken by independent outside researchers;
- the emphasis on qualitative methods and the use of quotations means that reports help readers to get to the 'story behind the story';
- the methods used are understandable for virtually all those involved in the study; and
- the studies are manageable in a wide variety of circumstances.

Tracer studies were not invented by the Foundation. Instead as Ruth N Cohen shows (page 8) we made connections between the ideas and methods of a handful of studies that were known about in 1998, and designed the studies around a set of fairly open parameters that were used to encourage early childhood programmes to undertake similar studies. We saw this as a pilot exercise in which methodologies could be explored and developed and, while we were hopeful, we really had little idea of the outcomes.

Why tracer studies?

As Ruth N Cohen points out (page 9) academic research is valuable but it is also expensive and, by its very nature, often long term and inflexible. We were looking for another form of research, one that would be more immediate, achievable by smaller programmes that did not have access to vast resources, and adaptable to local needs and capacities. The point was to gain useful insights about actual impact – or the lack of it – on children, people, families and communities, and how this looked when considered in relation to the aspirations of the project.

We recognised early on that these insights would often be personal and subjective rather than objective; would be hard to substantiate by, for example, statistical measures; and would need sympathetic sifting and consideration. In addition, we soon saw that some of the emerging data could be linked to something that is often underrated: intuition about what is happening. That doesn't mean that the data necessarily confirmed intuitions or feelings, rather that they helped us to see how accurate these were.

In some ways, the most exciting outcomes from the studies were that they gave us insights into aspects of

Honduras: Early Stimulation Programme (Christian Children's Fund)
Enrique, playing with softdrink cans.
Photo: Elaine Menotti, HART Fellow from the Centre for Documentary Studies, USA

programmes that we did not even know were there; and that they showed in very real ways the kinds of changes that early childhood programmes can make to people themselves.

Generally, as David P Weikart puts it: 'The tracer studies ask difficult questions regarding effectiveness of services that the broader field of research and evaluation often overlooks' (page 16). They represent a practical research tool that can allow programmes in the field to look deeper into their own work. This is especially so because they are locally determined and controlled. Ideally, they can be such a natural part of a programme's operations that their processes and findings feed back to enhance quality, effectiveness and effects for all concerned.

How tracer studies fit with more formal investigations

Tracer studies should not be seen as alternatives to more formal investigations: they should be seen as complementing them by adding findings about aspects of programme effectiveness that fixed-focus, quantitative studies are unlikely to reveal. For example, quantitative research can reveal the number of those whose behaviours were seemingly changed in specified ways by their association with early childhood development programmes.

But it is less successful in revealing the story of how people have changed, the impact that this had on their lives, and the ways in which this has fed through into their families, communities or societies. Both sets of findings are necessary and have to be considered together.

A similar argument can be made about research that sets out to test or validate hypotheses or theory. Most of those related to early childhood development come from rich 'Western' countries and, in some settings, aspects of them may sit uneasily with such factors as local cultural understandings, practicalities and environmental realities. Research that sets out to demonstrate the adequacy of such hypotheses and theories may be set up to take account of these but much of it is conceived from a distance with only secondary local involvement. Of course such research is valuable but again, its usefulness may readily be complemented with the outcomes of tracer studies because these come from an approach that is almost at the opposite end of the research spectrum. Tracer studies are unhindered by having to relate to any formal theory; originate from within projects; and set out to learn from what

is there – especially from the kinds of personal outcomes that participants reveal. In addition, the mass of information that results is often of immediate use: knowing about actual impact on people can be directly related to the conceptualisation and operation of a programme, changing or refining how effectiveness is perceived, modifying or adding to the programme's objectives, and perhaps fine-tuning programme content or changing the ways in which it is structured and run.

The articles in this edition

Most of the articles in this edition are arranged in four groups and together offer readers a tour of different aspects of the tracer studies. We start with an article that serves as *an introduction to these tracer studies* (page 8). Written by Ruth N Cohen, it outlines the Foundation's reasons for enabling the studies, then focuses on how the tracer studies were set up and implemented, and on how the resulting data were analysed. It concludes with a review of some of the findings; and is complemented by an overview of the studies so far (pages 14 and 15).

Theory and practice

A group about theory and practice starts with a contribution from David P Weikart (page 16) that sees tracer studies as both an opportunity and a challenge for the broader field of educational research. For him, the studies provide an opportunity not just because of their wide geographic and cultural settings or because each of the participating projects is fundamentally democratic, but because they look at project participant outcomes over time. In seeing the studies as a challenge, he means that they are challenged by the mainstream field of research and evaluation; that many of the tracer studies focus on programme ideas undergoing development; and that interviews with participants and judgments are highly suspect as outcome information. None-the-less, he concludes that the tracer studies generate many lessons, and that the broader field of educational research and evaluation can learn extensively from them.

How do you conduct the right kind of investigation into something as complex as programme impact on people in the medium to long term? In the Following Footsteps tracer studies workshop in Jamaica in 2002, participants considered this in some detail. One question they explored together was whether researchers should come from inside or outside the projects. The chart on page 19 sets out their deliberations. Their

Honduras: Early Stimulation Programme (Christian Children's Fund)
Pedro Aguilar and Madres Guias in session.
Photo: Elaine Menotti, HART Fellow from the Centre for Documentary Studies, USA

Kenya: Mwana Mwende project
Preschool children clearing up after play.

ideas are complemented by those of Professor Kathy Sylva (page 20). She reviews the importance of comparison groups and the significance of sample sizes. She also points out how qualitative and quantitative studies can not just coexist, but combine to offer more meaningful findings and interpretations.

To complete the group on theory and practice, the article by Willemien le Roux and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe (page 22) reflects on the issues that arose for them as they set up and operated a tracer study on participants in a preschool programme for San children in western Botswana. It can be seen as an example of how theory and practice really look when you are actually engaged in a study. It also shows one outcome: a snapshot of the situation that trusts the reader to see beyond the limitations of what a normal 'scientific' study would have been. It concludes that 'we found confirmation of things we had to improve and we found what we also knew intuitively through experience.'

Reflection and planning

The second group of articles covers reflection and planning. The first feature by Susan Branker (page 26) consists of an argument for fitting tracer studies into a system of monitoring and evaluation that is built into the Caribbean Support Initiative. This is a Foundation-supported, five-year regional programme on parenting initiatives. The second feature – by Celia Armesto Rodríguez – discusses the importance of analysis and reflection as organic elements of the Preescolar na Casa project (page 29). The project, which operates a parent education programme in rural areas of Galicia, North Western Spain, once rejected tracer studies as irrelevant but is now re-evaluating them as valuable tools that can help to further enhance programme effectiveness.

In her turn, Myrna Isabel Mejia describes how the Early Stimulation Programme for children aged zero to six years that is run by the Christian Children's Fund (Honduras), decided that tracer studies met the project's need for a qualitative study to assess the impact of the programme on the quality of life of the children and their families (page 32). She goes on to show how the studies adapted and evolved to cope with the realities of the work; and how the unforeseen topics that arose through the study were incorporated into its findings without distorting its original purpose. The final feature in this group is another product of the Jamaican Workshop mentioned earlier: a chart that records the reasons why projects undertook tracer studies (page 34).

How these tracer studies were conducted

The third group of articles looks especially at how tracer studies were carried out. Miri Levin-Rozalis and Naama Shafran discuss a tracer study that involved a very particular group of people: Ethiopian Jews who arrived in Israel in large numbers and who had to adapt to a very different way of life (page 36). The study looked into the impact of the Parent Cooperative Kindergarten operated by Almaya for children aged 18 months to 4 years, focusing especially on how well former participants in the kindergarten programme acquired tools necessary to better integrate into Israeli society.

Using a children's carnival as a method in a tracer study sounds unlikely, but S Anandalakshmy shows why it was appropriate and how well it functioned (page 38). This novel approach brought together huge numbers of respondents who had been involved in the childcare centres and crèches of the Self Employed Women's Association situated in the State of Gujarat in India. Just as

important, it sucked in relevant Government officials so their help could be enlisted to gain more space for the crèches.

Findings

The fourth group of articles surveys findings of tracer studies. The first, by Ann S Epstein, Jeanne Montie and David P Weikart (page 40) is about a study of elements of a parent-to-parent programme that no longer exists, in current programmes offered to families with young children at the same sites. The study specifically sought similarities to the philosophical principles and implementation guidelines of the original model.

In the next article in this group, Jean D Griffith (page 42) discusses the effects of the Adolescent Development Programme in Trinidad on a sample of 40 young men and women some 10 years after their participation, and compares these with another group with similar characteristics. Dr Roli Degazon-Johnson (page 44) then discusses the findings of a tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project in rural Jamaica. The study was a follow-up to an earlier piece of research that traced the impact of the project on mothers and children who were participants between 1986 and 1989.

Anne Njenga & Margaret Kabiru from Kenya (page 46) focus on gender differences in reporting the findings of a tracer study that looked at the effects of training for preschool teachers on the children they have cared for, in the Embu district of Kenya. From Ireland, Brenda Molloy concludes this group of articles by reporting on a seven-year follow-up study of mothers and children who participated in the Community Mothers Programme in Ireland (page 48). This is a home visiting support programme that supports the development of parenting skills of first time (and some second time) parents of children aged 0 to 24 months who live in mainly disadvantaged areas.

Policy and programming

Can tracer studies affect policy? This is a question that Ruth N Cohen put to four people associated with a wide variety of different studies, in a range of settings (see page 50). While acknowledging that no study can conclusively show a causal link, three of them saw that the results of the studies have contributed to changes in thinking and, very possibly, to shifts in the allocation of resources.

In the final article in this edition, Henriette Heimgaertner, Foundation Programme Specialist with responsibility for developing ECD programmes in a number of countries in Central and Western Europe, shows how the Foundation itself can learn from the tracer studies (page 54). She examines five projects and, as an example of what can be gleaned, identifies two 'programmatic landmarks' (timings or opportunities) that the tracer studies show to be especially significant if projects are to be effective. These are: the most opportune time to offer support for parents; and the time of transition from preschool to primary school.

What next?

Essentially, this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* is a 'sampler' that we hope will encourage you to look in more detail at the tracer studies that have been completed. A full list of publications about these can be found on page 58. For the future, we are also considering compiling all of them onto a CD ROM. More information on this will appear on our website – www.bernardvanleer.org – in due course. Meanwhile the studies themselves can be downloaded from the website and hard copies are available from the Foundation at the addresses shown on the inside and back covers. These are free of charge for single copies.

We are also considering a further series of tracer studies to both enhance our knowledge about what works in ECD programmes, and to develop tracer studies as a practical evaluation tool for use by projects. In terms of adding to our own knowledge, we are also interested in hearing about any experiences you may have.

We expect to publish *Introducing tracer studies* by Ruth N Cohen during 2003. This will focus on the approaches and methodologies of tracer studies; and will be a practical guide for those interested in implementing similar studies in their own settings.

Jim Smale
Editor

Our apologies for the long delay between this edition of Early Childhood Matters *and the previous edition. We expect to resume normal publication during 2003.*

Following Footsteps: why, how and where to

Ruth N Cohen

The author, as Senior Programme Specialist, has coordinated a series of tracer studies for the Bernard van Leer Foundation since 1998. These studies have all set out to follow the footsteps of former participants in early childhood development (ECD) programmes to find out what has happened to them five or more years after participation. In this article, she sets out the Foundation's reasons for launching the series. Drawing on examples from the studies and on discussions during the five-day Following Footsteps tracer studies workshop in April 2002 in Kingston, Jamaica, she then reflects on how these tracer studies were set up and implemented and on how the resulting data were analysed. Finally, she introduces some of the findings, showing how these can affect both practice and policy.

To the man or woman in the street it seems fairly obvious that a small child whose health, nutrition and material needs have been attended to, who has been stimulated and given loving care and attention, is more likely to do better in school and later life than the child who has not had such benefits. This is the basic premise on which many early childhood programmes are based, but very few programmes have tested whether the facts fit the theory. And while intuition is often very underrated, the gathering of empirical data can do much more than help us discover whether our instincts were accurate: it can give us insights into aspects of our programmes that we possibly did not even know were there.

Many questions arise from this supposition, particularly those that concern the effects of programmes on individuals – for example: in what ways are children changed and how does this impact on the ways in which they experience and manage their lives? And what of the adults involved in the programmes – the parents, paraprofessionals, paid workers, community members? Are they changed by their experiences? And if so, how and with what kinds of consequences? Were the changes planned for and anticipated? Or accidental and unforeseen? Were the changes good or undesirable? What did the programme do that seems to have caused change? How good was it at bringing about desirable change? What can it learn from former participants that could enhance its effectiveness in the future?

Perhaps we should also admit that one motivation for these studies was professional curiosity – where did all the children go? What happened to them some years later? Did the ECD programme make any difference to their lives in the medium term? To find out, we used a strategy in which each

participating programme set out to generate a mass of qualitative, often subjective, data: the thoughts and reflections of the people concerned, as they responded to questions. There was no way of knowing beforehand what any of them would report – especially since none of the programmes that participated had originally planned to do a follow-up study. To cope with this, these tracer studies assess and analyse data sympathetically, holding on to the importance of what people say about what happened to them and how it changed them, while trying to synthesise meaningful lessons that can feed into practice. This may seem daunting but, as the articles in this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* show, it is possible, even when outcomes were negative.

Beyond evaluation

It was not pure coincidence that the Foundation decided to explore this form of study at the time that it did. The Foundation first supported a major early childhood programme in 1965 and now has over 30 years of experience working in this field. Throughout this time we have stressed the importance of evaluation but usually only during and at the end of a project or phase of a project.

During the mid-1990s we started to think beyond evaluation, to dig a little deeper, to see a little further. We carried out an internal project to summarise the experiences of more than 120 programmes that we had supported over the years (see the Historical Project Database at www.bernardvanleer.org) and this experience raised many questions. One outcome of our questioning was the Effectiveness Initiative, an in-depth investigation into what makes ECD programmes work for the people who take part in them (see *Early Childhood Matters 93, 96* and 99); and another was this set of tracer studies. There is, in fact, some overlap in that several of the programmes involved in the Effectiveness Initiative have undertaken a tracer study as part of their investigations.

Another major consideration was the need for data on the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes outside of the rich Western countries. Much of the practice in early childhood has been based on theories developed in the West, and research findings have come from longitudinal studies carried out in industrialised countries. Such studies are expensive and, by their very nature, long term. We were looking for another form of research, one that would be achievable by smaller programmes that did not have access to vast resources, and that could be adapted and moulded to fit local needs and capacities.

The nature of these tracer studies

The tracer studies reported on and discussed here are summarised in the table 'The studies so far' on pages 14-15. They are diverse, not least because of the diversity of the participating programmes: each is unique in terms of its setting, the resources at its disposal, the ways in which it seeks to do its work, the communities with which it is engaged, and so on. However, the programmes also have important characteristics in common – for example, all are implemented by locally-based partners; and their objectives all centre on developing and improving the lives of children and their families and communities in the here and now, based on the belief that this will lay the foundations for improved opportunities in the future. This mix of diversity and commonality is actually reflected in these tracer studies: each is unique in its response to the same kinds of factors that make each of the participating programmes unique. But common to all is implementation with local partners, and the objective of discovery for the purpose of improvement.

Kenya: Mwana Mwende project
Siblings at the toy making workshop.
Photo: Joanna Bouma

The programmes involved are all action projects: they have not been conceived or implemented as research studies in which children/families have been

The Netherlands: Samenspel project
Fingerpainting during a visit to the Bernard van Leer Foundation.
Photo: Angela Ernst

randomly assigned to 'treatment' or 'control' groups; and participants have not usually been subjected to tests or other research instruments. Because each of the programmes studied is different in its target group, in its context, and in its strategies, the methods used to trace former participants and discover their current status are almost as varied as the original programmes.

Coupled with that diversity is an openness to whatever comes out from the research, to the unexpected and to the surprising. This openness is valuable, governed as it is by the specific foci that each tracer study has, because whatever the tracers discover can be seen as an opportunity to learn and to understand.

Creating a tracer study

What should be the main considerations when contemplating a tracer study? What are the objectives of those involved in such a study? These questions have many possible answers, as is demonstrated especially in the table 'Why we did a tracer study' on pages 34-35. In addition, Willemien le Roux and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe explain the origins of, and objectives for, the Bokamoso Preschool Programme tracer study in Botswana on page 22. These included wanting to reinforce and test the assumptions of practitioners. In passing we should note that it was this study, carried out 1993-1995, that inspired the Foundation to look seriously at tracer studies. For its part, Preescolar na Casa in Spain considered and then rejected the idea of such a study more than five years ago. But later, as Celia Armesto Rodríguez explains, 'the idea of going beyond the current reality persisted' and she details the many issues and questions that the project team are exploring because, after 25 years of operation, 'assessment continues to be a challenge that can be enhanced by initiatives such as tracer studies' (page 29).

The research questions

Key to the design of any study is to ask the right questions. This could mean questioning assumptions that may not have been previously articulated. Devising these questions is something that can usefully be done through a participatory exercise in which all participants and stakeholders can have a say. And it is at this early stage that other questions need to be answered as well. These will include some that determine the nature of the study, for example:

- whose agenda is being followed – that of the programme, community, parents, funders, policy makers, a mixture?
- Is the objective to understand, to change, to persuade, etc?
- Where and by whom are the research questions to be generated?
- What is the focal unit – children, families, caregivers, the process of change, etc?
- In what ways is the context being taken into account?
- What assumptions does the study make about the programme?

Then there are questions about how the study is to be done:

- what will be the basic design?
- Is the study to be mainly qualitative, mainly quantitative, a mixture?
- Who are the informants, the sample?
- Will there be a comparison sample? (see article on page 20)
- What is the timeline for tracing (how many years back)?
- What is the timeline for carrying out the research?
- Who is on the research team and what will be the nature of the team?

- What are the research instruments, the tools?
- Are the findings going to be interpreted as well as reported?
- What form will the report take (who is the audience)?

The question of who should undertake the study – inside or outside researchers – led to animated discussions and sharing of experiences during the Jamaica Following Footsteps workshop in April 2002 because people from all 'sides' were present. The positive aspects and the challenges are summarised on page 19, but the consensus seemed to be that a mixed research team of insiders and outsiders is the best solution. However, as Myrna Isabel Mejia puts it, 'it is necessary to clearly define the role of the inside personnel in the research process so that objective results can be obtained' (page 32).

Questions that were *not* asked during these tracer studies concerned hypotheses and that is because these tracer studies were not developed in response to specific hypotheses. All the early childhood programmes we are dealing with here have the basic assumption that the programmes are 'doing good' but they seldom design their programmes around hypotheses. We therefore believe that tracer studies should be as open as possible and should not set out to *prove* a specific hypothesis: that the programme is the best ever, or that a specific strategy is the best method, or that the children get higher grades in school. A tracer study needs a specific focus, but within that it needs to be open to whatever comes out from the research, to be open to the unexpected and the surprising: whether it fits assumptions or not, it is an opportunity to learn and to understand.

Methods and approaches

As the articles in this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* show, with tracer studies there is plenty of choice when it comes to methods and approaches. Here the advice of Professor Kathy Sylva during the workshop is very relevant: 'Where design is concerned, be methodologically promiscuous, adventurous, eclectic.' And a perfect example of this comes from India where the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat identified a novel and highly culture-specific method. S Anandalakshmy describes how SEWA organised children's carnivals for large numbers of former crèche and preschool centre participants and used the event to interview children and mothers. They also invited Government officials, gave them visible roles and lobbied them to give the programme support (page 38).

Trinidad & Tobago: Servol project
Forres Park Life Centre. Father with two preschool children helping with learning numbers.

The best laid plans can go astray and this can happen with research as in other spheres of life. In this kind of study it must be remembered that research is not a linear process, and much of it is like trying to find your way through the forest. It is a matter of continually keeping the context in mind – the people, the community, traditions, beliefs, resources, services – and of being alert and open to the unexpected.

Analysis of data and reporting

The qualitative nature of the data that tracer studies like these produce creates a major challenge for analysis. This involves a balance between the detail and particularity of what has been discovered on the one hand and, on the other, finding ways to create patterns from the data that will allow useful lessons to be drawn for future practice. To do this it is necessary to create categories that are suggested by the nature of the data and to allocate the data to appropriate categories. But the same data will often need to be used in

different categories. It is a bit like cutting the cake in different directions – horizontally, vertically, crosswise – several times over. Each cut (each grouping) reveals a different reality about the cake; and the data are in play throughout to remind people of what they have to contribute.

Ideally, the establishment of the categories and the allocation of data to the categories, should be a collective effort by a team of people with different perspectives because, for example, the data could suggest one set of categories to an outsider, another to an insider.

How does this work in practice? An example of how data can be analysed at different levels can be found in the report of the tracer study of Almaya's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten in Israel. The chart on page 15 includes Almaya's findings about a shift for former programme participants in the axis that runs between individuality and community – findings that arise from cross-cutting analysis in which the precise information in the original data remained visible.

The ways in which findings are reported will depend very largely on the intended audience and the objectives of the study. In some cases it might be possible, or advisable, to have different versions in different formats, not with the intention to mislead or misrepresent, but to ensure that each audience gets the material it is most interested in, and in the ways that make it most useful. Whatever method is used, the voices and the words of the respondents must come through – a few quotations can enliven the dullest of reports, and they add reality. After all, as Jean D Griffith (who researched the study in Trinidad) told participants in the Following Footsteps workshop: 'We are operating on the principle that as human beings we cannot be reduced to any formula. No matter how well or how scientifically designed, the research cannot give us the reality of this human psycho-physiology.'

There are many questions that can arise during the processes of analysis and reporting. Some of these will be related to the original research questions and the design and implementation of the study. Some of the others could be:

- why didn't we find what we expected to find?
- If the results are not strong, is this the fault of the research methodology or the programme?
- What are the implications of the fact that children are going into a nationally determined educational system?
- What can/should be done with these data, these findings? Can they influence programming? Can they influence policy?
- Who should we communicate with: are there links to other areas, programmes, or services such as primary schools?

Learning and who benefits

From the discussions during the Following Footsteps workshop in Jamaica it was obvious that project staff and leaders felt that they had learned a lot from these studies and their processes and findings. In particular, they had gained a deeper understanding of the capabilities and aspirations of the people they were working with; and a definite recognition (or reminder) of how essential it is to be inclusive (not only children, not only mothers, and so on). It was also fascinating to see how the need to frame research questions had stimulated deeper thinking about the objectives of their work and the strategies used. Workshop participants felt that they had become even more aware of the communities and services around them and of how, in some cases, these were letting down the former participants (for example: poor schools, lack of employment or training opportunities).

We are all still at the early stages of learning and the more deeply we look into the studies that have been carried out so far, the more possibilities there seem to be. The studies have an unusual blend of quantitative and qualitative research and findings, and this has led to very wide learning possibilities applicable within and across different groups of participants.

At local level such groups include participants in a programme; staff in the field as well as those who plan, monitor and supervise programmes; and members of local communities. At regional/national level they can include those who plan and/or implement other ECD programmes, those who are involved in non-ECD programmes such as health or education, and those who plan/implement policy and/or allocate resources. In the Caribbean there is 'a dearth of knowledge about the impact of various interventions due to insufficient measurement and inadequate mechanisms to do so' and Susan Branker, who is the Project Manager for the Caribbean Support Initiative', sees many possible benefits in the use of tracer studies at different levels and for varying purposes (page 26).

At the Bernard van Leer Foundation we can all use and learn from the methods and the findings to help with planning, developing and monitoring programmes.

We can also inform ourselves as we share our learning and resources with the field of ECD in general and with our partners and peer organisations. In fact, the tracer study tool fits well with our aspirations to improve our learning. We anticipate using these tools in the future to critically look at the validity of knowledge and skills a project is trying to impart because, as Henriette Heimgaertner explains, 'The studies provide a rich source of information and some challenging food for thought for those of us engaged in defining parameters for programme development'. In her article on page 54 she gives just two examples from many available: parent support programmes, and the continuum between preschool and primary school.

But there are very many other topics that arise in the studies so far available. To name just a few: gender roles; the impact on implementing staff; ways to reach teenagers; influencing parenting practices now and in the future; influencing the health and nutrition of children and families; transition to the formal school system; language/cognitive development; social/emotional development; personal presentation; and those sometimes ill-defined concepts like empowerment, self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, reciprocity/mutuality, ethos of equality, attitudes, beliefs, norms, philosophy, values, tolerance, understanding, socialising children into society's norms, preparing children for the future, discipline and moral guidance.

To get a full picture it is necessary to read the tracer study publications (see pages 58 and 59) but to give some indications of the breadth of coverage and insights, some short excerpts are included in this edition of *Early Childhood Matters:* disciplining San children in Botswana (page 24); what is happening with family support programmes in the USA (page 40); attitudes to parenting and nurturing the children of former participants of the Adolescent Development Programme in Trinidad (page 42); what happened to the children of participants in the Teenage Mothers Programme in Jamaica (page 44); gender differences, role models and social change in Kenya (page 46); and motivations for volunteering to become a Community Mother in Ireland (page 48).

Affecting policy

From the table 'Why we did a tracer study' on page 34 it is obvious that the eight studies described had varying objectives, were aimed at different audiences, and were intended to be used for different purposes. For those who carried out the studies, the process has been an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of effects and impact and, where the programme still exists, to adjust and develop it. This can, of course, have effects that spread much wider than the original programme, but the question remains: can Following Footsteps affect policy?

The article on page 50 brings together experiences from four very different contexts – USA, Kenya, Ireland and Botswana – and shows that this is possible given a number of specific ingredients: the original programme must be strong and of good quality; the research process needs to be transparent as well as rigorous; and the right people have to be approached in the right ways. And then there is the special importance of figures. Despite our emphasis on qualitative approaches, there is no doubt that policy-makers, politicians and many funders are influenced by large numbers of respondents and by cost-benefit studies. But those figures need backing up with the words of real people, with the stories that show us where their footsteps led them. ❍

Spain: Preescolar na Casa project
Preparing lunch together.
Photo: Maria Xose Miranda Barros in La Coruña on one of her home visiting days

* The Caribbean Support Initiative is a Foundation-supported, five year regional programme with a thematic focus on parenting initiatives in early childhood development.

The studies so far

country	Botswana	Ireland	USA	Kenya
programme studied	Bokamoso Preschool Programme, a training and monitoring programme for San children in isolated settlements	Community Mothers Programme, a home visiting programme in Dublin aimed at first time mothers during the first 12 months of the child's life	Parent-to-Parent (PTP) Dissemination Programme (1978-1984) in which a common open framework was implemented by 7 agencies targeting varying populations	Embu District Centre for Early Childhood Education (DICECE), a 2 year preschool teacher training programme that is part of a national programme
about the study	a comprehensive study of the programme carried out 1993-1995	a follow-up study in 1997-1998 at age 8 years of earlier research in 1990 at age 12 months	a study in 1997-1998 to search for evidence and influence of PTP principles and strategies	a study in 1998-1999 looking at the effects of training for preschool teachers on the children they had cared for
researcher(s)	Bokamoso team members who were initially guided by an outside researcher	researchers from the Health Authority and University in collaboration with programme staff	researcher employed by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation – the original implementing organisation	researchers from the Mwana Mwende Child Development Trust, both of whom had previously worked in the national training programme
sample(s)	172 children who had been in preschools and were traced in Standards 1-4 in 7 primary schools	76 mother-child pairs representing one-third of the original randomised controlled sample; 38 from the intervention group, 38 from the control group	four sites selected for diversity in terms of client population, agency type, programme and community size; interviewees were original participants and staff of current programmes	913 children from 3 cohorts (1991, 1992, 1993) were tracked in 12 primary schools, of which half had had trained preschool teachers, the other half untrained
findings	children who had been in preschools were mostly still in school; many parents were supportive; dropout figures were lower than assumed; main problems were the language gap, use of corporal punishment, lack of cultural understanding; it was seen that the contrast between pre and primary schools can create animosity and tension	almost all the variables measured favoured the intervention group: immunisations, nutrition, children's attitudes to school, homework, reading, mothers' attitudes towards childcare and discipline and their self-esteem, as well as effects on subsequent children; the study concludes that the changes in childrearing practices found in 1990 were sustained seven years later	although none of the original programmes are still in existence, and there were many other intervening factors, several aspects of the philosophy and principles are evident in current programmes and many former participants remain active; with present welfare restrictions there is a large unmet need for quality childcare yet the needs of children often get overlooked	children who had been with trained preschool teachers made the transition to primary school more easily than the others, yet children's overall performances were affected by the academic rating of the primary schools, high repetition and dropout rates, as well as alcohol, drugs, child employment, poor male role models, and changing lifestyles, value systems and moral codes

country	Jamaica	Trinidad	Colombia	Israel
programme studied	Teenage Mothers Project (TMP), a full-time 18 month programme aimed at teenage mothers and their infants in a rural area	Adolescent Development Programme (ADP), run by Servol, addressing social, emotional, and psychological needs of 16-18 year olds	PROMESA, run by CINDE, aimed at children and communities in a remote coastal area to improve physical, emotional and intellectual development	Parents' Cooperative Kindergarten run by Almaya in 2 areas of Beer-Sheva for immigrant families of Ethiopian origin
about the study	the study, in 1999, traced the impact of the TMP on mother-child pairs some 10 years after participation	the study, in 1999, looked at the effects of participation on former ADP trainees some 10 years after completion	the study was a continuation of a longitudinal investigation that began in 1978; originally quantitative, this study is based on interviews carried out in 1999 and 2001	the study, carried out in 2000-2001, aimed to find out what had happened to children who had participated in the programme 1988-1990
researcher(s)	an outside researcher	an outside researcher	staff of CINDE	an outside researcher who has undertaken evaluations and other research for Almaya
sample(s)	20 mother-child pairs, 10 of whom had been in the TMP and 10 who had not	21 men and 19 women from 4 different ADP centres; outcomes were compared with 18 men and 21 women from the same areas who had not been in the ADP	80 mothers and 39 promotoras (who had implemented the programme) who had been in the programme 1978-80, and a selection of their (now adult) children	the intervention group comprised 37 young people aged 12-17; a comparison group comprised 34 matched young people; these were all of Ethiopian origin while a third 'non-Ethiopian' group of 25 young people was also interviewed
findings	TMP mothers were all employed and most had pursued further education and training; they were more self assured with a greater sense of control over their lives than the comparison mothers; the latter had given birth to more than twice as many subsequent children; the TMP children were given higher ratings by their teachers than comparison children	the ADP gave former trainees greater confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem, enhanced their parenting skills, increased their level of tolerance towards others, and improved their communication skills and relationships with their parents; members of the comparison group were also generally performing at similar levels in their employment and life in general	in 2001, children of promotoras had an average of 10 years schooling, compared with a 1989 average for the area of 6.3 years, and 3.5 years for their own mothers; the promotoras expressed competence and self-confidence and were leaders in the community; there were many improvements to general health and the environment as well as general economic improvements	it was evident that the intervention children were essentially different from their Ethiopian-origin counterparts and closer to the Israeli norm; this could be seen in tendencies towards individualism, abilities to express emotions and needs, responsible behaviour patterns, and acquisition of the 'tools' that could enable them to better integrate into Israeli society

Tracer studies: an opportunity and a challenge

David P Weikart

David P Weikart is the founder and President Emeritus of High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Michigan, USA

If we want to understand where tracer studies fit into the broader research field, we need to look back to the first part of the twentieth century. Until the late 1930s any type of educational research was a small, occasional thing, the province of specialised academics with obscure interests. Then came the second World War when efforts to improve the training and the effectiveness of servicemen brought to the fore the psychological and educational assessments available at the time. They were found to be sadly lacking. In the United States of America, major federal investment was required to build a research base to facilitate assignment of men to military tasks. This interest and recognised need spilled over into the post war work of these professions, and serious focus was given to developing a body of sophisticated research designs, assessment methods, and procedures of analysis. With increased understanding of these elements, this trend has continued, greatly facilitated by the availability of sophisticated computer programmes to simplify computations.

Most of the projects that could be the subject of such research positively assist those who participate: the mother with her infant; the teenager with education; the labourer with skills. But from a public or educational policy perspective, participant satisfaction is **not** the point. If the service idea is to have use beyond those served in a single locale, it must demonstrate that investment of time and money can produce something that participants could not obtain without the project. Further, to have strong policy implication, the project outcomes must be replicated elsewhere with similar individuals.

In order to reach these goals, one of the most important research elements recognised today is the absolute requirement of a properly designed sample of participants for any study. All aspects of a project, the daily administration, the training of staff, the equipment and materials available, the enthusiasm of the participants, can be in place. However, if those assigned to participate and those assigned not to participate (the experimental and control groups) are not sampled and assigned correctly, none of the project information will be worth more than passing interest. In a very real sense, the way in which the groups are established forms a rigid gate into the value of the project.

It is on these issues that the tracer studies present both an opportunity and a challenge for the broader field of educational research. Internationally, the need to find effective means to support children and families, especially those living in poverty, is widely recognised. These studies offer important information.

An opportunity

Tracer studies represent an opportunity for many of the right reasons. First, the projects represent diverse geographical locations and cultural settings serving a wide range of individuals in very different countries. Too often our ideas about what services should be provided are driven by information generated in the economically affluent world, especially the United States of America.

This fact is a natural result of vast resources and large numbers of well-trained staff available for educational projects. However, even for the industrialised world, verification of educational approaches or service processes is required. The tracer studies step into the complexity of settings that stretch and test a broad range of service ideas in new ways.

Second, the projects are fundamentally democratic, a trait increasingly seen as an essential ingredient of any modern society. The projects these studies examine are usually focused on community members discovering ways to help others in their community. This approach is one of empowerment and entitlement. All people respond better when they can see that the product of their effort is accepted and respected. This dimension of the tracer studies establishes their leadership for the broader field of research and educational evaluation.

Third, the studies look at project participant outcomes over time. Too often, the development of information stops at the end of the service component of the project for participants. Looking at outcomes over time is a very important step in the process of separating those approaches that actually change circumstances from those that simply enable some event to occur earlier in time. The tracer studies ask difficult questions regarding effectiveness of services that the broader field of research and evaluation often overlooks.

USA: High/Scope, *Father and child.*

A challenge

Tracer studies are challenged by the mainstream field of research and evaluation. The field's accepted research standards tear at the fabric of the work to date. First, most of the tracer studies have not developed an adequate sample size, nor have they undertaken random selection and assignment. Without meeting these basic criteria, the information generated is interesting for developing ideas and suggesting lines of thought, but offers little guidance to shape public social or educational policy.

Second, many of the tracer studies focus on programme ideas undergoing development, making it unclear just what the specific service or approach actually was. Policy can only be built around information from stable programmes. New programmes that are in constant change, as they rightly respond to the experience of delivering services, are not good candidates for policy information because it is unclear

what aspect of the project is actually being evaluated.

Third, when project ideas are new, it usually means that instrumentation to assess the project outcomes has yet to be developed. While interviews with participants and judgments by project staff are especially vital for the development of a new service, such data are highly suspect as outcome information. Much of the information presented in the tracer studies, from the initial phase of the project as well as the follow-up phase, comes from such interviews and judgements. Of course, that does not mean that it is always safer to use traditional outcome assessment approaches: are they standardized for this specific population? Is translation of instruments or training procedures involved, and who checked the new forms for accuracy? How were the trial field tests of the instruments conducted? In short, the tracer studies have tackled a very difficult problem indeed, but for the findings to be meaningful, there must be answers to these questions.

The contribution of tracer studies to educational research and evaluation

All that said, however, there are many lessons generated by the tracer studies, and the broader field of educational research and evaluation can learn extensively from them. From my point of view one of the most important lessons is from the new community or educational service patterns. Working on limited budgets and often short staffed, these projects have explored new patterns of enabling individuals to meet and overcome problems. Big New Ideas in service are hard to come by. Adding parenting issues to health services was one such idea. Another was training parents to assist other parents instead of using professional staff. But these and similar ideas are from the past; breakthroughs in the 1960s and 1970s. What can be gleaned from these tracer studies that would form the basis of a breakthrough in service ideas for this decade? They may be hidden in this body of work; the requirement is to discover them.

Another lesson of value from the studies stems from their diversity: diversity in methods of service; diversity in culture and language of participating groups; diversity in economic development of the community; and diversity in ethnic composition. These studies are not 'poor cousins' to the large scale, well-financed studies in affluent countries, they are storehouses of improvisation and resilience in the demanding daily lives of communities.

Thus while educational research and evaluation usually demand clarity of project operation and project outcomes, these studies offer complexity and a wealth of information about actual day to day work with people. With this initial information, future projects can be more fully implemented and evaluated with more traditional standards.

The Next Big New Idea

The key to valuable information from the tracer studies is to present the project information obtained, qualified by the standard research reservations, such that the restless and innovative approaches are clear. They need to be studied closely for ideas that might suggest major changes in service methods. If the Next Big New Idea were obvious, we would be doing it. However, it is buried in other fields, other approaches, other ways of looking at problems.

For example, use of computers and other electronic technologies are out of the question in many parts of the world because of cost, availability of trained personnel, and lack of knowledge as to how to effectively use such technology even if it were available. But somehow, within technology is one Big New Idea. Not just to use computers and technology, but how they are used. Can parents be linked with other parents and project staff in ways that give immediate support for immediate problems? Can training of centre-based staff be improved with video streaming of demonstration classrooms with voice over by a knowledgeable commentator? With the advent of digital communication devices (including cell phones) linked to satellites, is a new training vehicle opened?

The point is that to innovate, deliver, and document effective programmes is a difficult task. The tracer studies encompass a wide range of diverse efforts which can provide intellectual building blocks for newer undertakings, if we can only learn to build on the old while attempting the new. The availability of such studies to the broader field of research and educational evaluation moves forward the potential of knowledge about high quality service. ❍

Inside or outside researchers?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having research done from within the programme or organisation?
And what are the pros and cons of using outside researchers? The following issues were mentioned at the Following Footsteps workshop in Jamaica.

Using insiders – positive	Using insiders – challenges	Using outsiders – positive	Using outsiders – challenges
✓ Bring inside knowledge and understanding of the project ✓ Enable organisational learning ✓ Enable processes of analysing and understanding within the project ✓ Familiarity with and sensitivity to culture, norms, language ✓ Familiarity with and acceptable to respondents ✓ Have intuitive and intrinsic knowledge ✓ Research will be truly 'owned' and applied ✓ Can influence the programme ✓ A clear immediate sounding board ✓ Interpersonal relationship allows the insider to go deeper ✓ Financial benefit to organisation ✓ Awareness of political environment ✓ Investment in the outcomes (double-edged!)	☞ Danger of bias, for example, in favour of certain outcomes ☞ Familiarity/knowledge might hinder objectivity ☞ Possible over-identification with project ☞ Too close to the problem ☞ Could be too passionate, unable to separate issues ☞ Respondents might give the answers they think the project wants to hear ☞ Competing work loads ☞ Difficulty in shifting roles ☞ Could have blinkered approach to data ☞ Investment in the outcomes (double-edged!)	✓ Challenge the thinking and what has been taken for granted ✓ Bring broader and new perspectives and wider experience from other projects ✓ Have expertise in research ✓ Are objective ✓ Have a fresh view – new eyes ✓ Only commitment is to research, not to project implementation ✓ Can see 'outside the box' ✓ Bring new ways of understanding ✓ Lack of bias ✓ Optimal focus ✓ Detachment	☞ May miss important knowledge or understanding through lack of information and being new to the subject ☞ May not be familiar with the culture, local language, jargon ☞ Will not be aware of hidden agendas ☞ Their questions may not be relevant ☞ There could be social distance because of background and expertise ☞ Specific researchers could be imposed by outsiders/funders ☞ Money spent on outsiders could be used for project development ☞ Outsiders can be resented because of bitterness about higher wages, 'stolen' information and suspicion from respondents ☞ Respondents may not respond to an outsider ☞ Additional time is needed for orientation ☞ May not be open about own assumptions ☞ Time is sometimes limited

Possible solutions

- One solution could be insider research supported by outside resource persons/monitors.
- A single perspective can be avoided by involving as many as possible insiders in the team and having a primary outside researcher guiding the research process.

To compare or not to compare?

Kathy Sylva

The author is Professor of Educational Psychology in the Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford, United Kingdom. *In this article she reviews the importance of comparison groups, considerations that arise in sample size, and the place of qualitative and quantitative data in longitudinal studies.*

A study that is following up participants after some years is a form of longitudinal study. In this kind of research, there are two questions that can be asked:

- what are children/families who participated in the programme like a number of years later?
- What would children/families be like if they had NOT participated in the programme?

The first of these questions is essentially looking for description, it is one way of looking at outcomes, but you can never be sure what caused them. If this is your research question, you do not require a comparison group.

The second question cannot be answered without a comparison group. This will help to show the effects of a programme by comparing similar populations who did and who did not participate in the programme. Although the use of a comparison group does not mean that you can 'prove' that it was the programme that made the difference, it strengthens the case that it was.

Types of comparisons

There are basically three different types of groups that can be used for comparison:

1. the **control** group where the same kinds of individuals/families from the same kinds of neighbourhoods have been randomly assigned to be in the programme or not (the programme group is sometimes called an 'intervention' or 'treatment' group);
2. the **matched** group in which you first define important characteristics of the intervention group and then match them with individuals in another group that is as much like the first group as possible; and
3. the **comparison** group which is composed of people who are like those in the programme in many ways but did not participate for whatever reason. For example, they could be from a different village.

Of these, the control group gives you the best possibilities for making your comparisons some years later because the assignment into programme/control group was random right at the beginning. There are, however, some drawbacks, particularly the ethical issue of denying a programme to those who want it when the resources are available. If there are not sufficient resources available from the start, it might be possible to offer services at a later stage, in which case families might be willing to be randomly assigned in the first instance, knowing that *everyone* will participate in the programme at some time.

With the second two groups on the list, you cannot know for sure that it was the programme that made the difference, since you do not know whether the people in the programme are different from those who are not. The mere fact of being willing to participate already makes them different in some way.

An important difference between a matched and a control group is that the control group was randomly allocated. The matched group is a little stronger than the comparison group because you know how the two groups are alike and have selected them for their similarity.

The more we have control and matched groups in our studies, the better able we are to limit the influence of other factors. If we are trying to establish effects we need to 'triangulate', which means getting our data from two or more sources and matching or comparing them.

How big should the samples be?
The main constraint when you are trying to find out the effects of a programme are the influences on children/families that are beyond the sphere of the programme. Here is where numbers become important because if the numbers are large enough then unusual circumstances for one child do not influence the overall outcomes. If the numbers are small, then an unusual event for one individual impacts the sample in a disproportionate way. An example is a research study involving the use of a specific methodology to teach a small number of children to read. In the control group there is a child whose aunt is a teacher and suddenly moves in to her home and teaches her to read. In this case, the reading scores of a small group might be 'artificially increased' by the aunt who joined the family.

If both groups contain larger numbers, for example 60+ children, the impact of one child is not great. If, however, the study includes a small number, for example less than 16 children, dramatic and unusual circumstances for one child may greatly influence group outcomes.

Determining the number of children to include in the sample depends on many factors, including the resources available (time, money, expertise and so on). Calculating the optimum number needs to be done in relation to the number in the total population. This is a complicated process and hard to do. Another approach, not quite so good, is to look at previous studies of the same kind and aim for more or less the same sample sizes. If the groups have been randomly assigned, then the sample sizes can be smaller; if the sample is to be non-random, then a larger sample is needed to take account of greater variation between the groups.

In any case, the sample needs to be representative of the kinds of children you are serving. For example, if you select for tracing only children who are **in** school several years later, this does not represent the whole group as there may well have been some that dropped out.

Qualitative or quantitative?
Whether to do a qualitative research study or a quantitative research study depends on the research questions, the objectives of the study, the audience being aimed at as well as the resources and skills available. And there is also the matter of sample size.

If the study is qualitative then it is impossible to do with 2,000 children. If the study is quantitative then samples of 60 and 60 can be sufficient. In the example the visiting aunt who was a teacher, her impact will be less with a sample of 60 in each group than one which has a smaller sample. You may know about her and it is possible to talk about her in the study, but she does not 'swamp' the outcome.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies struggle to interpret the evidence and account for differences between respondents. And in many ways, it is a false dichotomy. It is possible, for example, to have a fairly large scale quantitative study and also to draw a smaller sample from that study for an in-depth qualitative study. Combining the different methodologies should lead to more meaningful findings and interpretations.

The story behind the story: tracing San children in Botswana

Willemien le Roux and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe

Botswana: Children of the Earth project
San preschool children of Bere, Ghanzi district.
Photo: Matthias Hofer

In this article, Willemien le Roux, founder of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme, and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe, its current Coordinator, reflect on their experiences in carrying out a tracer study on participants in the programme. This currently operates in 13 San settlements in the Ghanzi District of western Botswana and incorporates three main hypotheses: that San children who have gone through preschool will be less likely to drop out of formal schools; that parents will participate more positively in the formal education process if their children are somehow 'lured' into learning through play; and that the introduction of languages in an informal way will break through children's resistance to other languages and give them a head start in primary school.
The reflections of the authors are complemented by an example from the programme of the depth and richness of information that tracer studies can reveal (see box on page 24).

We were surprised when the Bernard van Leer Foundation said it wanted to reprint our study[1] of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme in Botswana. We did not go into the experience with the intention to change anyone's ideas with it, we are practitioners and we went into the study for ourselves – it was not meant to impact policy.

The process of doing the study was very important for us, we hoped for several outcomes and we also wanted to reinforce and test our own assumptions.

We saw our own programme as a cultural bridge for the San children; we wanted to prepare them to take the strain of the transition to primary school. We felt we were getting stuck. Were we reaching our goals? We wanted to see what we could change to broaden the scope. We were constantly running into contradictions, so we needed tools to convince other people that the project was working, that what we were doing was worthwhile.

There was opposition to our work, some people were sceptical and said it did not make sense, that we were going backwards by teaching the children in the preschools in their mother tongue. And there were primary school teachers who blamed the preschools for making the children feel more free.

We are not researchers and at the beginning we had an advisor who was linked to the funder. She is a sociologist and provided research guidance. She planned the study with us and we designed the questionnaire together. But she took another job in another country and we were left on our own. We were stuck, we had started the process, we had the basics, but not enough research knowledge.

We had our doubts from the beginning about using questionnaires as we knew that, especially among the mostly illiterate San people we work with, the written word arouses suspicions. Our communities have had many people asking them questions and they feel nothing is ever fed back to them. The San suspect that people such as researchers, journalists and film makers have been making money out of what they have told them. We felt that the process of asking the questions would alienate people and would create expectations. So we decided not to use the questionnaire and to do it in our own way, in our own time, using a style of questioning according to what we knew would work and according to what we knew was there. We had to do it informally, otherwise they ask themselves 'where is this information going?' and you don't get the real answers.

The method we used was to go to social gatherings with the community motivators. We would sit with the people, gathering information through chatting and talking with them. We picked up people on the road, gave them lifts, and got further information or confirmation during the ride.

For example, one question we needed to know was if they had any income, and often it meant trying to find out how many cows they have. If you ask this directly they would answer that they have none – hoping to get something from the interviewer since many aid programmes in our area are aimed only at the so-called destitutes. So we would go and sit with people in their homes and within the general conversation would ask them about their routines: 'If, in the evening, you go to the kraal[2] to see if your cows came home, what do you do if one has not come?' Through talking with them about caring for the cattle we gradually could learn how many they had. They never would have given us the answer had we asked the question directly.

Then we went away and tried to put the information on paper. We sent the data to the researcher who analysed it and sent it back but there was a long lapse between data collection and analysis. We were very disappointed with her report because the numbers did not represent what we *knew* so we had a second round of data gathering.

We went to the schools again and checked records of children who had been in the preschools and might have dropped out of primary school, but there were many difficulties: lack of records; false records; transfers of children and teachers; inconsistent spelling of names in the San's click languages; and other inconsistencies. Schools are given equipment and support on the basis of numbers of children, so we suspected that sometimes more children were registered than actually attended. There was no way to check the validity of the data, and people in the education department shared their own frustrations with us. Names changed because schools could not record children's names in their own language, so names were recorded as they were 'heard'. We developed strategies to try and verify data. We collected all the names of the dropouts and then went to training sessions for primary school teachers, and checked with groups of teachers to see if they could identify the children.

But still the results were 'insignificant' statistically and we had to find other ways to show what was there.

Disciplining San children in Botswana

In San society, children are brought up as equal to adults, hence parents rarely resort to corporal punishment, yet physical forms of punishment were widespread in the Botswana school system. This fed back into the behaviour of parents as this extract from a group discussion with San parents shows.

Question: ***Do San ever use corporal punishment?***

Dada: I beat my children when they were small because I knew others were later going to beat them, and it helped them to get used to that. But I hit them in the right way, never with the fist. When a child is small, and he/she touches something dangerous, we would pinch the child on the back of his hand or slap him lightly on the hands, to teach him.

X'aega: We talk to our children. We talk to them a lot, and everybody talks. If a small one does something wrong, we hit him on the hand softly. When I was small, and I used to be naughty, I was disciplined by my older uncle. My father would not discipline me, but the elders would get together to discuss about me, and then my uncle would do the talking.

[Comment: This would only be for things like stealing, breaking other peoples' possessions, or antisocial behaviour. This was checked with the people from other settlements, and they agreed to the same system.]

X'aega: I have sent my two children to preschool, and I have had to beat them on their behind to force them to go. I walk with them all the way to school, beating them if they want to turn back. But then, once they have accepted that they should go, I talk to them every day about what they have done at school. That way they know that I am interested. But they also like the preschool. They are not scared.

Habe: If you beat a child too much, they become stubborn, and you cannot win that child over again.

Question: ***Is there a way in which you can change the behaviour of a very naughty child to become disciplined? What if the child does not listen any more?***

Dada: It is better to give the child a reward if she/he has done something right, than to beat him/her when doing something wrong. You can always bribe a child to do something, if he knows he will get something afterwards.

X'aega: My oldest child left school, and refused to go to the hostel. She has no more clothes left to wear and I will not force her to go. I do not have the money to pay for the food they eat at school anyway. If a child refuses something, let him go. Never force a child.

Dada: If the child has done something wrong to you, and you complain to me, I will go with the child to your house, and explain the wrongdoing. I will then give the child a beating there, or I can ask you to beat her for me. My sisters, or my mother, are also responsible to take care of these things.

Question: ***I have seen small children hitting their parents in the face, even with a stick, and people just laugh. Why?***

Qhomatcãa: People know that children still do not know everything, and if you are too forceful with children, you can make that child very weak. It is important to let the child feel strong.

Xguka: Sometimes I have tried to beat my child, then she tells me not to do it. She also says to me when I tell her to do something: 'I will only cooperate if you do not beat me.'

Dada: We teach children to have respect, but it takes time. Respect is something very important. If you have respect, you do not laugh at people with disabilities, or at weak people. People should not laugh at others.

* le Roux W (2002), *The challenges of change: a tracer study of San preschool children in Botswana*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 15 (see page 58)

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Botswana: Children of the Earth project, *San children standing behind a wall.* Photo: C Visser

In our third round of data gathering we went qualitative. We developed several strategies:

- parents were interviewed by parents – our driver was also a parent and got very involved.
- Parents were interviewed by trainers.
- Teachers were interviewed in groups.
- Trainers were interviewed.
- Teachers and parents provided information through anecdotes and we began to use direct quotes and anecdotes to tell the story.
- We used the many books on the San as reference points as well – it put the information that we were collecting in context.

Then we put all this together in our original study report. All that we could do was to provide a snapshot of the situation, trusting that the reader would be able to see beyond the limitations of what a normal 'scientific' study would have been – we know there is a story behind the story. We found confirmation of things we had to improve and we found what we also knew intuitively through experience.

This was a very valuable experience for us because it reinforced what we knew. From that experience we have learned to work more with the parents, making it more of a two-way flow; we are working with the primary school teachers to explain better what we are doing; it is helping us to change attitudes such as by learning more about the background and culture of the children. Overall we have used the study to widen and deepen the programme.

1 *The challenges of change: a survey on the effects of preschool on Basarwa primary school children in the Ghanzi District of Botswana* was published in 1995 by Kuru Development Trust and is now out of print. A revised and updated version was published in 2002 by the Bernard van Leer Foundation as *The challenges of change: a tracer study of San preschool children in Botswana* (see page 58).

2 An enclosure for cattle

Tracer studies and the Caribbean Support Initiative

Susan Branker

The author is Project Director of the Foundation's Caribbean Support Initiative (CSI). This is a five year regional programme with a thematic focus on parenting initiatives in early childhood development. Its mission is to 'be an intermediary resource project that will bring people and resources together to enhance early childhood development capacity and knowledge in the sub-region'. The CSI began in December 2001. In this article, Susan Branker reflects on how tracer studies fit into the CSI as part of its built-in system of monitoring and evaluation.

The framework for the CSI was sketched against the background of insufficient knowledge and exchange of information on approaches to childrearing and parenting practices in the Caribbean region. There was also a dearth of knowledge about the impact of various interventions due to insufficient measurement and inadequate mechanisms to do so.

While there is a plethora of programmes both at the national and community levels, very little has been done to measure the impact or trace the outcomes of these programmes. In fact, very often, assumptions are made by policy-makers and project planners that programmes are having the requisite impact on their target audience without testing their various hypotheses. As a consequence, both quantitative and qualitative data are lacking, resulting in very little documentation of experiences. Not only does this limit the opportunities for cross-fertilisation, but it also restricts the sharing of lessons learnt.

Given that one of the major objectives of the CSI is 'to introduce and support the implementation of good parenting practice in ECD at the community level, taking advantage of validated child development programmes', we recognise that we need adequate evaluating tools and research mechanisms to assess the efficacy of various programme principles and approaches.

In its role as a facilitator for the development of new projects and programmes and the replication of existing ones, the CSI has placed a great deal of importance on the ability to measure/evaluate outputs and impact, and we have identified tracer studies as a useful tool and an important plank within some of its various strategies.

There are a number of possible benefits to the CSI in using tracer studies:

- they can allow for better planning of projects;
- they could help to inform and influence CSI advocacy at the policy level;
- they would promote important research and documentation;
- they would provide important qualitative data needed to measure the impact of various interventions;
- data obtained from the studies could serve as a guide in the replication and dissemination of experiences; and

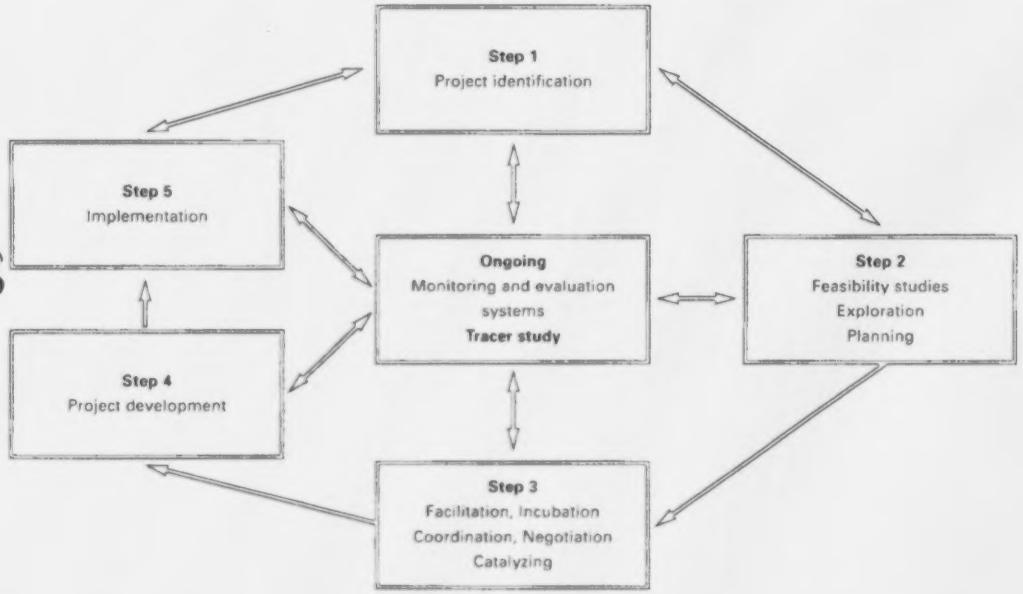
- they could help to upgrade current understanding of various conceptual issues for both the CSI and its stakeholders.

The CSI is now in the first year of its workplan and, as such, is in the early stages of the project cycle with its partners. This means that the use of tracer studies would provide the CSI with a unique opportunity to build in evaluation and research components from the very first conceptualisation and identification phases. The studies can be incorporated into a number of CSI core strategies: monitoring and evaluation; replication and dissemination; research and documentation; and learning and advocacy.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is generally agreed that retrospective studies are more difficult and less reliable and, wherever possible, tracer studies should be included in both pilot projects and long-term programmes from their inception.

Using our monitoring and evaluation model, various components of a tracer study could be built in at various points as outlined in the diagram on the left.



Step 1: Once the project has been identified, the strategy for the tracer study could be developed (including budgeting).

Step 2: During this planning phase, a baseline study could be conducted to document what exists.

Step 3: With facilitating support from the CSI, partners could identify the type of tracer study needed and the target audience(s).

Step 4: As the project is developed, the tracer study should be embedded in the project design and monitoring/research system and clear impact indicators would be identified.

Step 5: During the implementation phase, the indicators can be studied, assessed, adapted as necessary.

Using this approach we would hope to gather the requisite knowledge that our partners need in their attempts to replicate various working principles and adapt good practices. The approach should also demonstrate the value of investing in various types of programmes.

Replication and dissemination

The CSI is interested in assisting with the transfer of knowledge and experiences across the region. Based on feasibility study findings and recommendations, the CSI will facilitate the development of a number of pilot projects to test the working principles of support models from identified countries with 'well established' parent support and ECD programmes.

As part of the assessment of models being considered for possible replication, a tracer study could be designed to evaluate the impact of the assessment and also provide some insights into how 'transferable' the experiences and lessons are. Similarly, in the design of pilot projects based on the replication and dissemination of working principles, a tracer study could be built in as a means of evaluating short-term impacts. This could help inform the future development of the project and influence the types of inputs needed by various stakeholders.

Research and documentation

Research and documentation are key instruments in the transfer of knowledge and the cross-fertilisation needed to build capacity at all levels in the region. Yet research, whether or not in the form of tracer studies, is often not conducted because it is viewed as too costly and burdensome for the agencies concerned.

However, from a regional programming perspective, tracer studies are worth the investment because they could help us increase knowledge and understanding about various approaches to ECD and the types of impact various interventions may have. These include approaches to childrearing and socialisation in the region and whether the projects and programmes established are 'in sync' with these approaches. Questions include:

- are they having the requisite impact?
- Is there consistency between local/community realities and policy initiatives?
- Are programming initiatives only designed in response to 'perceived' needs rather than actual findings?

Learning and advocacy

In its role as an intermediary, the CSI will seek to leverage support from regional and international development and financing agencies to allow for large-scale buy-in and adoption of a regional framework for the replication and dissemination of knowledge on good ECD and parenting practices.

Data obtained from tracer studies can therefore play an important part in the CSI's learning environment. The successes and failures of various approaches, methodologies and models provide key lessons needed for any attempt to disseminate information or to advocate at different levels for greater buy-in or investments in the sector.

What the above demonstrates is that there is enormous scope for the use of tracer studies in regional programming and planning. The CSI's focus is on capacity building, the sharing and exchange of knowledge, and ultimately assisting with the development of an environment which is more supportive of ECD and parenting initiatives. We see tracer studies as an important tool in meeting some of these objectives. ❍

The challenge of assessment

Celia Armesto Rodríguez

The author is a member of the Preescolar na Casa project team, coordinating and organising the training and evaluation of professionals. The project operates a parent education programme, focused on child development and education within the family context, for families in rural areas of Galicia, North Western Spain. In this article, the author shows how analysis and reflection have been organic elements of the programme throughout its long life, and why tracer studies – once rejected as irrelevant – are now being re-evaluated as valuable tools that can help to further enhance programme effectiveness.

The events leading up to the report that follows date back to 1977 when Preescolar na Casa (PNC, Preschool Education in the Home) was begun, a parent education programme in child education that has now been in operation for 25 years.

Twenty-five years is a considerable length of time in which to demonstrate that utopia can sometimes be achieved. And we say utopia because in 1977 it was not easy to imagine that we would be where we are today in the field of education. We are here, however, and this may possibly be due to the determination of the people who promoted the programme – people who along the way tried to instil in professionals the inescapable need for a continuous analysis of the reality in which they were intervening as the most efficient way of carrying out a project successfully.

So much so that assessment, within a context of reflection-based action, is inherent in the dynamics of the programme, in planning, process and outcome alike. It is a basically qualitative approach, which takes note, among other elements, of the expressions of satisfaction of the immediate participants (children and parents), the professionals who run the programme and the rest of the community.

Subsequently, this qualitative assessment was enhanced by a more formal plan, an assessment plan that attempted to analyse the programme as a whole. Between 1994 and 1997, a set of tools was conceived that would enable quantified data to be obtained.

At the time when we were defining the assessment plan, we were already thinking about analysing what happened to the children who had taken part in the programme and who had moved on to primary school. Although we thought the information would be interesting, we rejected this line of research because we felt it would be difficult to isolate the effects the programme might have had on the children and their families from other influences that we are all subject to. In reality, we also did not support this form of research because we did not

Spain: Preescolar na Casa project
Learning through doing.

believe in this kind of analysis, and we had doubts about the information we might obtain. We rejected the idea and carried on as planned, analysing what we had at the time.

However, this seemed an incomplete response. The idea of going beyond the current reality persisted and we heard about some studies along these lines supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation – tracer studies – and the dilemma emerged again. Do we really know what impact the programme has? Do we know the scope of our intervention in the different areas? And what is more important: are we interested? Do we want to know?

Tracer studies

We became interested and the Foundation provided us with relevant information (previously published studies) and invited us to take part in a workshop that would deal with tracer studies in depth.

After analysing the information, we were faced with several questions, the most important being: what is to be gained from carrying out studies of this kind?

Other more specific questions from each stage of the study are detailed below.

1. It is obvious that the family and early childhood support programmes are beneficial to the participants. What are studies of this kind intended to show? Do the findings enable us to obtain sufficiently striking and conclusive data to demonstrate to society how necessary each programme is, or do they simply verify what is already taken for granted? Is it worthwhile making the effort to demonstrate something that is obvious from the start?

2. What global assessment/conclusions can be reached from the tracer studies as a whole?

3. What is derived from the conclusions and verified data? What steps are taken as a result of the analysis?

4. What happens when the outcome is not what was expected, not what we were looking for?

- What other kind of information is obtained that was not sought initially?
- Are these data used? Do they help to redirect the programme intervention? Do they modify the original research plan?

5. Who is responsible for the research method? Who decides what is going to be investigated? What determines which aspects are to be taken into account?
- It seems logical to think that the objectives of each individual programme would be what indicate and define the steps to be taken, but is any aspect of tracer studies introduced – perhaps a standard feature?

6. The type of assessment varies from one programme to another.
- Who decides which type is to be implemented?
- What advantages or disadvantages are derived from its being external/internal to the programme – or a combination of both?
- Would results vary according to the type of assessment?
- Would the information that could be sought depend on the model chosen?

7. Who decides which tools to use for the analysis?
- Is the continuous assessment that is carried out in each programme designed so that data can be gathered that will allow analysis of the programme's impact?
- Is progress checked from one year to another?
- Are the ways in which the programmes influence the target population and the community in the shorter term analysed?

8. When analysing the results, are differences observed in the length of time of the intervention/duration of the programmes? In other words, is there a relation between duration and achieving the desired impact?

As a result of taking part in the Following Footsteps tracer studies workshop in Jamaica, many of these questions were answered. The most difficult task now remains: trying to respond to these ideas as a team, because our response will define the research method.

Preescolar na Casa is clear that it wants to assess and be assessed in order to know the impact of its programme beyond the actual time of intervention. It is clear that the first step is to be willing to accept the information obtained, even if it is not what was expected. It is also clear that the analysis must embrace the whole programme, not just its outcomes. This is necessary so as not to lose sight of the essence of the impact for programming purposes: which elements in the programme determine what impact the programme has. Equally, the research should be qualitative and not just quantitative: many aspects that must be analysed are not quantifiable, yet they occasionally provide much more information. In addition, the study must address everyone involved in the education process: families, professionals, community, politicians, possible financial backers ... in short, society in general.

Twenty-five years on, PNC defends assessment as essential to programme development. Twenty-five years on, assessment continues to be a challenge that can be enhanced by initiatives such as that of the tracer studies. ❍

Sharing experiences

Myrna Isabel Mejia

The author is the General Coordinator of Projects at AINCADEH, an independent research consultancy. In this extract, she introduces a tracer study of mothers and children who had participated in the Early Stimulation Programme in Honduras for children aged 0 to 6 years, that has been run by the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) since 1995. The programme is implemented by Madres Guiás (Mother Guides) for children 0 to 4 years in their homes, and by Kindergarten Aides for children up to 6 years in non-formal preschool centres. Having operated for approximately six years, the need arose for a qualitative study to assess the impact of the programme on the quality of life of the children involved and their families.*

The study was based on the comparison of two groups of children: one that had been in the programme and another that had not received any kind of intervention from institutions involved in projects of this kind.

Methodologically, the study consisted of three major stages or phases: designing the research; collecting information; and analysing the information. During each of these stages, a number of issues began to emerge that had not been foreseen, but which resulted from the dynamics of the study.

Designing the research

When it came to drawing up the design, determining the sample and defining the most appropriate instruments and techniques, several questions arose.

- Would comparisons between the groups produce the results expected of the study?
- Would the results be obvious?
- Could the results of the research affect the normal development of the programme?
- Was CCF prepared for the results? How would CCF personnel react to them?
- Should other elements in the programme be included besides mothers and children?
- Were the planned methods (including observations, drawing, and meetings with the two groups) suitable for obtaining information?
- Would it be possible to compare the two sets of information that would be obtained?
- How could we use other tools and experiential techniques to enable mothers and children in the sample to have a closer communal relationship with the research team?

Other issues also arose.

- That the parameters of the research are related to the following factors:
  - analysis of the different environments of the children;
  - data or secondary information that could be compared with the empirical data;
  - triangulation of the information, that is, corroborating information obtained from each source from different perspectives, and being able to crosscheck information with the variables and the units of analysis.
- That indicators must be established so the progress of children in each group can be compared.

Fieldwork and collecting information

During the fieldwork, situations arose that had not been envisaged during planning and which prompted changes to the original idea. The following are examples of this.

- At the start of the field research, the participants in the programme could not understand why only a small number of families (the sample) could participate in providing information on the programme. They believed the information should be provided by everyone involved. They also thought that the study was motivated by CCF's intention to leave the community, and the fear of the researchers was that members of the sample group might conceal the benefits of the programme; and

- The CCF field personnel at the research site were also uneasy about the task in hand because they felt that the research also implied that their work was being assessed.

At the outset these difficulties made relations between the field researchers and those being researched difficult. It was necessary to organise seminars for the beneficiary group and for the CCF workers to explain the task in hand and remove the doubts.

Initial plans for the research focused more on mothers and children. However, during fieldwork it was considered necessary to take the opinions of fathers into account. This was to gain a more complete vision of the children's relationship with all the members of their families, and to define a more accurate profile of the father figure.

Analysing the information

The process of data ordering and analysis was initially carried out according to the focal topics of the research that had been envisaged in the plan:

1. attitudes of mothers in relation to the well-being of their children;
2. awareness of the early stimulation programme;
3. emotional and social development of the children;
4. behaviour of the children in the environment of other families;
5. performance of the children at school;
6. changes in family health and basic sanitation; and
7. changes in social and emotional development.

As we gathered responses from the different respondents and saw that they were similar, we had to decide how to analyse the information without losing sight of the purpose of the research. Should we, for example, structure the information in line with the original focal topics, or should the topics that arose from the information be allowed to effectively restructure the research?

This dilemma provoked serious discussions among the research team. Taking the first line would risk us misinterpreting the information, while taking the second line would risk us losing the total and integral meaning of the study, of straying from the prime objective.

Finally a compromise was reached: it was decided to relate the information to the original focal points of the research; and also produce a summary of the most significant findings as a whole. In this summary, the findings from the analyses were related to the original foci of the research.

To conclude this introduction to the Early Stimulation Programme tracer study in Honduras, I want to stress that, in studies of this kind, it is advisable for the research team to be made up of personnel from both outside and inside the institution. And it is necessary to clearly define the role of the inside personnel in the research process so that objective results can be obtained, without interference from the institution. ○

Honduras: Early Stimulation Programme (Christian Children's Fund)
Madres Guias teaching other mothers about illnesses.

*The tracer study on the participants in the Early Stimulation Programme in Honduras will be published in English and in Spanish by the Foundation in 2003.

Why we did a tracer study*

	Botswana	Ireland	USA	Kenya
Why we did a tracer study	we wanted to know if the work was useful, were we affecting the drop-out rates? could we counter the scepticism we met?	we wanted to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach, to see if the work continues to have an effect after some years	to find out if there could be any traces left of programmes nearly 20 years after the event	it is a training programme and people always talk about the teachers; after 30 years' work we wanted to see what was happening to children
Whose agenda was it?	ours	ours, we were trying to convince the Health Board to take a new approach	ours and BVLF's	ours
What audiences were being aimed at?	ourselves, the communities, the teachers; we didn't think about dissemination when we started	parents and the Health Board. It is good to share it with a wider audience now	primarily High/Scope and BVLF, possibly policy-makers, teacher trainers	government, policy-makers, funders, communities
How did the study fit other research/ evaluation activities?	none of us were researchers, we had an open agenda, allowed ourselves to be informed by the process	the programme has been evaluated from the start but this was independent of other studies	very well: we have been able to combine the findings with earlier work in a new publication	there has been much research and evaluation but mostly on processes
What are the uses of this approach?	we used the results to improve the programme, to work with primary schools	the results have contributed to policy changes	we were quite surprised to find as many traces as we did, suggesting durability of intense training	many of our findings were unexpected
What are the limits of this approach?	the official records were unreliable, this study couldn't give overwhelming proof		there have been many changes in the context over the years, especially mothers into the labour force	the long interval between the children leaving the programme and the study – so many other variables have intervened

* From the Following Footsteps workshop, Jamaica 2002

	Jamaica	Trinidad	Colombia	Israel
Why we did a tracer study	we wanted to know what had happened to the mothers and the children	we wanted to know how the programme had impacted life choices	it follows on from 30 years of collecting data, we wanted to demonstrate change and impact	to find out how the children from this very distinctive group have fared
Whose agenda was it?	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally	ours	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally
What audiences were being aimed at?	donors, the parish, the media	ourselves, donors, government, community	other projects in other parts of the world, funders	the implementing organisation
How did the study fit other research/ evaluation activities?	it was a good follow-up to our earlier research	our other evaluations have been descriptive	it fits our whole package of evaluations and our work in the Effectiveness Initiative	the programme has been evaluated from the start but this population has been over-researched
What are the uses of this approach?	we were able to find new kinds of information because of the qualitative approach	we could see the effectiveness of the programme	the research began as quantitative, it took a long time to see change in indicators; this last part has been qualitative	we found that the programme had made a tangible difference to children's lives
What are the limits of this approach?	subjectivity, lack of a 'pure' comparison group	attributing change when so many other things happen		so much data are gathered – how can this be handled?

The individuality-community axis

Miri Levin-Rozalis & Naama Shafran

This extract is from a tracer study' of Almaya's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, that was established for Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Some 70,000 Jews have reached Israel from Ethiopia since 1977. Their way of life there was so different that the adjustment process has been fraught with difficulties on all sides. The association now known as Almaya was set up in the early 1980s and has implemented programmes to reach all sectors of the community, including young children and their mothers. One of these was a Parents Cooperative Kindergarten for children aged 18 months to 4 years that operated in two neighbourhoods of Beer-Sheva. The kindergartens operated for five hours each day and were staffed by two paraprofessionals from the Ethiopian community with volunteer parents on a roster basis. The tracer study looked at how well former participants in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten programme acquired many of the tools that are necessary to better integrate into Israeli society.

The Ethiopian and Israeli cultures have very different perceptions of human beings and their function in society. In Ethiopian society, the human being is a member of a group and a community, which are bound by a communal-traditional culture that reinforces 'togetherness' and does not encourage individuality.

Despite the changes that have taken place in the Ethiopians' society since the community migrated to Israel (primarily the break-up of the community structure and the extended family) the underlying forces that {traditionally} preserve the cohesiveness and structure of the community are still very strong.

Although Israeli society is extremely varied and is made up of different communities, the dominant theme is one of individualism, a perception that supports the development of the individual in the direction of maximum self-actualisation.

Unlike other children of Ethiopian origin of their age, the Parents Kindergarten children we studied displayed a distinct sense of self and a clear tendency toward individualism. The children perceived themselves as independent entities, and this perception was evident in a higher awareness of themselves, their ability to express emotions or a need for help, and their ability to develop hobbies and talents that were theirs alone. The people around them reacted accordingly. The teachers of the Parents Kindergarten children viewed these children more clearly and less superficially than they did their peers. The Parents Kindergarten children were perceived as more dominant – children whose needs were clear – and there was a greater tendency to recommend – and integrate them into – the support programmes they needed.

Normally, Ethiopian parents tend to refer to their children as one entity – *them* – without relating to each child individually. A notable finding was that, in addition to the Parents Kindergarten children showing a distinct sense of individuality, their parents, too, saw them as individuals, identifying unique elements in them, such as hobbies or ambitions for the future. These parents also seemed to perceive their children as being more responsible and delegated responsibility to them for performing tasks at home.

These differences should not be seen as a dichotomous division between the individual and the community, but rather as a shift in this axis. The Parents Kindergarten children were still less individualistic than Israeli children of the same age who are not of Ethiopian

origin (and not caught between two cultures), or immigrant children from the former Soviet Union who came from a society that is more similar to the host Israeli society from the standpoint of self-perception and individualism.

At the same time, the Parents Kindergarten children seemed to feel that they belonged to the Ethiopian community. They neither denied nor 'forgot to mention' their connection with the community, apparently seeing themselves as part of a large, supportive body, which for them constituted a kind of family. This could also mean that the content of their Ethiopian tradition and heritage was far more accessible to them.

What was it in the Parents Kindergarten that caused these differences in the children's self-perception? A look at the aims of Parents Kindergarten activities shows that in order to develop the child's discrete sense of self, the programme's creators seek to give the children the ability to express emotions and needs, and to develop a sense of independence and freedom of choice. Interviews with the founders of the Parents Kindergarten and those who are involved in its work reveal a concrete picture of the application of these aims in the kindergarten.

Emotional expression
In interviews with the programme's coordinators and teachers, they said that as part of their work in the kindergarten, they address emotions and provide warmth, but above all, they work with the children on identifying and coping with their emotions. This is done, for example, by transparently saying to the child, 'You're angry because Danny took the toy', or 'You're sad because your mommy hasn't come yet'.

Freedom of choice
One of the interviewees reported that, *in every activity in the kindergarten, the child has a choice.* The activities are structured and organised, but at the same time, the children are given freedom of choice. At the meal, the children have a choice of what they want to eat (rice or potatoes). The teachers have to build organised activities with a beginning, a middle and an end, but the children are never obliged to take part in the activity. They can choose whether they want to take part in a creative activity or play, for example, in the dolls' corner. It is important to note that the programme supervisors describe intensive work with the counsellors (women of Ethiopian origin trained for work in the kindergarten) on this issue: not to force the children to do something simply because the group has a planned activity. This underscores the wide gap in the perception of a group acting together, even in kindergarten, where the individual does not have the ability to choose, in contrast to the Israeli reality for which the children are being prepared.

In the preschool itself, the counsellors talk to the mothers about their child's experience in kindergarten activities, emphasising each child's unique character. The children are given more attention and the parents see the results of this later at home. Interviews with Parents Kindergarten teachers and coordinators showed that the parents recognise the uniqueness of children who have participated in the Parents Kindergarten. The parents say that the kindergarten child is more developed than their other children, brings home paintings and drawings, and sings songs

Israel: Almaya

learnt in school. Sometimes the mother comes home from the kindergarten with her own impressions and shared experiences with her child, and this also sets the child apart in her view. The children's ability to develop a distinct perception of self is the result of a combination of two factors: the child's own experience in the kindergarten (designed to develop self-perception) and the parents learning to see the child's uniqueness, which enhances the process.

* Levin-Rozalis M & Shafran N: *A sense of belonging: a tracer study of Almaya's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, Israel* (to be published 2003 as Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 19).

Children's carnivals as a tracer method

S. Anandalakshmy

The author is a consultant in Child Development and Education and has been working for some years with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) situated in the State of Gujarat in India. The members of SEWA mostly live in the rural areas; those in the urban areas tend to be migrants with rural connections. In any case, the poverty they share overrides any significant rural-urban differences. Among its many activities, SEWA trains local women to work in its childcare centres/crèches. This article includes a discussion of a novel way of tracing very large numbers of former programme participants.

In both rural and urban areas a carnival is called 'Mela' and the families go to it in large numbers, enjoying the chance to be dressed in their best clothes and to buy trinkets or other things for the household. Knowing the place that a Mela has in the lives of the people, SEWA decided to get the 'alumni' of the Child Care programme to come to a children's carnival, or 'Bal Mela' as it is called. This was to be the beginning of a different kind of tracer study.

The plan originated in an informal meeting of the SEWA organisers, supervisors and crèche workers. Once the plan was made, putting it into operation provided no obstacles. To begin with, the children were from the neighbourhood, as were the teachers.

The teachers and supervisors first made a list from their past records and went around their areas to locate the children. Several of the older children would greet their former teachers when they crossed each other on the streets. So the study began with the children that the teachers met frequently. Each of these children was asked to remember the names of children who were in the childcare centre or crèche in their time. Two or three names would be recalled; and these children, in turn, would give more names. Almost organically, the network grew. The teachers then conducted an informal census, by visiting each child's house personally. They noted during their visits whether the children were attending school or not. They asked the children about their interests and plans for the future and made brief notes. Needless to say, word spread and entire communities heard about the Bal Mela. There was much excitement.

Of the total of 2,906 children traced, 2,798 were attending school and 108 were not. This shows that over 95 percent of all the children who had attended the SEWA programme were in school. If one considers the socio-economic category in which the families fall, it becomes clear that SEWA's role has been significant.

At Anand, Kheda District, which was the first location of SEWA crèches for the children of the women workers in tobacco fields and factories, the list of children went to 1,125. So the organisers decided to invite the number of children that could be accommodated in one session at one place: 750 children were invited for the first Bal Mela while the rest would be invited for a second carnival.

I was present at the meeting at which the idea of having a Bal Mela was mooted. About two months later, I was in the SEWA office in the same district. By this time, the entire list of all the children who had passed through the SEWA crèches in Kheda was available. I told them to take a photocopy of the document and to keep the original 'census' in a bank vault! This was mainly to impress upon them the value of the information that they had collected and the continuing need for documenting their own activities.

At Ahmedabad, a similar exercise was undertaken. The childcare workers (teachers) began to identify the children in their areas, who had been with them in the preschool years. Several urban habitations were combed for the SEWA. And what a harvest! More than 950 children turned up at the carnival.

For the children, the festivities had all the elements of a Bal Mela: games to play, skits to see, and music and other activities to join in. In addition to a formal lamp lighting ceremony, there were talks by visiting dignitaries and by SEWA organisers. The children were meticulously groomed and dressed;

some wore their brightest and shiniest clothes, others came dressed up as well-known historical or fictional characters. Niches were set up for various children's activities and games: crayon drawing, vegetable printing, making caps, puppet shows, music and dance and so on. Some groups of children had come prepared to stage skits or do mimicry. Some had been learning, laboriously, to introduce themselves in English! More than anything, they were happy to meet their friends and run around the place, savouring the excitement of a carnival.

For all of them, a hot lunch served by their teachers, was most welcome. The lunch brought back to their minds the wonderful snacks they had eaten as children in the SEWA programme. They were also given a souvenir to take back home (something like a small bowl, filled with candy). There were minor variations in the three Bal Melas: two in Kheda District and one in Ahmedabad city. One had more outdoor equipment like swings and roundabouts, another had a display of the children's art work, the third had more emphasis on races and sports for children and so on.

SEWA, as an organisation, is known for its ability to work with the Government and to access the resources that Government schemes allocate for children's programmes. In each of the Bal Melas, relevant Government officials had been invited and given visible roles in the formal part of the inaugural function. Their help in getting more space for the centres and crèches was sought, as space continues to be a perennial problem.

What children and mothers said

During the carnivals a small team of researchers went around talking to children and mothers. Selected extracts are given below.

I am now studying in the 9th Standard. My mother told me that I was only three months old when I was sent to the crèche. I cried a lot in the beginning, she says. What I know is that I became fond of the teachers and enjoyed the activities in the crèche. My mother and my father work in the tobacco fields. They are working hard so that they can educate us. My sister is in the second year of her College. I wish to study and become a lawyer, so that I can help others to get justice. (Meriel aged 13, from Kunjrav Village)

I study in the 6th Standard. My father and mother are tobacco workers. I always loved going to the centre. My teachers there were very good. My favourite subject is English. When I was on the stage, I was not afraid of introducing myself in English. I have not decided what I would like to be in the future, but my parents say that I can study as much as I want to. At the Mela, I loved the Magic Show and I was happy to play cricket with my friends. (Martin aged 15, from Chikodra Village)

India. # 1 teacher in Sanjaynagar centre (Bapunagar) acts out songs with the children so they become enthusiastic about learning.
Photo: Sara Gomez, HART Fellow from the Center for Documentary Studies, USA

She was three years when I put her into the centre. She was one of the first batch in the centre. Today, she is in the 7th Standard. She loves to study and goes to school without hesitation. My older daughter had not been to such a centre, so when I put her in school, she was not eager to study and dropped out. But Mona is very smart. She stands up boldly in her class and answers questions. Her teachers at the primary school are also praising her. (Manguben, mother of Mona, aged 12)

I sell Agarbatti (incense sticks) and other small items. At first, I did not believe that anyone would take care of my child when I was away. When I sent him to the crèche, he was not speaking. He would just take off his clothes and wander about. The teachers were very patient and trained him to have proper habits and not to take off his clothes. After joining the crèche, he brushes his teeth and says his prayers. He reads books and respects others. These are behaviours that are appreciated in our society. Therefore, I am satisfied. (Geetaben, mother of Montu, aged 8)

The interviews all tell the same story. It is certain that the intervention in early childhood has a positive impact on the development of cognitive and social skills in later years.

Family support programmes

Ann S Epstein, Jeanne Montie and David P Weikart

This extract is from a tracer study[1] that followed up four of the sites of a Parent-to-Parent programme in the USA to find organisational traces of the programme's principles and strategies. The Parent-to-Parent programme evolved from an Infant Education Project (1968-1971) in which professional staff visited low-income families with infants, through a Home Visit Project in which the home visitors were peers (mothers from the same communities), to the Parent-to-Parent programme (1978-1984). This programme worked to a model that was flexible enough to adapt to local family needs and context. Its principles were: the primary focus of the programme is enhancing child development and parenting skills; the programme emphasises building on family strengths; and the programme design is under local control. Strategies were: peers or paraprofessionals used as family service workers; learning at all age levels based on developmentally appropriate practices; and an educational approach that incorporates active learning for parents, children and staff.

When it was first disseminated in the early 1980s, the Parent-to-Parent (PTP) model was a unique approach to serving families. Although none of the original programmes is still in operation at the sites we investigated, we looked for elements of the PTP model in current programmes offered to families with young children in those communities. Specifically, we looked for similarities to the philosophical principles and implementation guidelines of the PTP model. Certainly, the presence of one or more of these features in a current programme is not necessarily an indication of direct influence from the PTP model.

As family support programmes have proliferated over the past 20 years, it would be impossible to separate out the effects of one particular model. However, an examination of the presence or absence of these features provides an indication of the long-term effectiveness or staying power of key elements of the PTP philosophy and highlights approaches that have proven successful over time.

Primary focus on enhancing child development and parenting skills

Of the current programmes reviewed for the present study, few had as their primary goal enhancing child development and parenting skills. It would seem that as family support programmes endeavour to address the multiple needs of families with young children, the children themselves actually receive less and less attention.

Focus on family strengths

Over and over again, the phrase used to describe current programmes was family based. Almost all current programme staff described their programmes as being based on family strengths. This emphasis is certainly congruent with the PTP philosophy and demonstrates that family support programme philosophy has indeed shifted from a deficit model to a strength-based model.

Local control of programme design

Most of the current programmes we investigated were locally designed and administered; only one was designed and disseminated by a national organisation.

Peer-to-peer service delivery
Many family support programmes today continue to use paraprofessionals to provide direct services to families. However, few programmes continue to rely on volunteers, as was the case in the PTP project. Current administrators and programme supervisors cite difficulties in recruiting volunteers today, and several of those interviewed stated that they do not feel comfortable with not reimbursing family service workers for their time and expertise.

Staff training
Preservice and inservice training programmes for paraprofessionals vary widely from programme to programme. Many of those interviewed, professionals and paraprofessionals alike, expressed a desire for more training, but most programmes lack the funds or time to provide it.

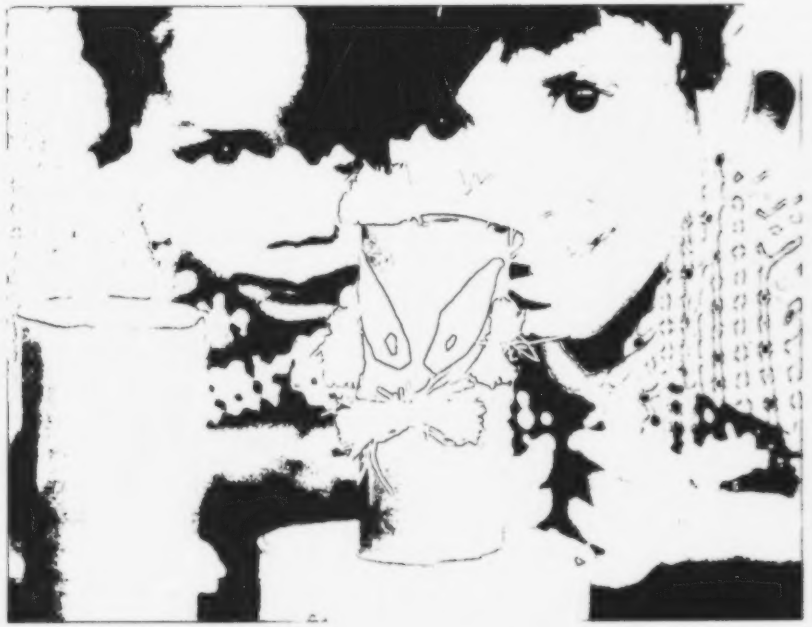
Developmentally appropriate, active learning approach to education
A developmental approach to learning was a hallmark of the PTP model. The approach, which was carried out through staff training and the child development curriculum, affected participants and staff at all levels. Developmentally appropriate materials for children are widely available today, and it may be that interviewees did not think it important to mention that they used them. It is also possible that, as the focus of family support intervention has shifted more towards parents' needs and away from their children, the developmental approach to learning has been lost. Active learning, a key feature of the PTP model, was noted as a feature associated with the current programmes that offer parent-child activities.

Programme parameters essential to address current family needs

The social issues affecting families with young children at the four sites today are a reflection of issues seen across the country: an increase in single parent families; pregnant and parenting adolescents; domestic violence; and substance abuse. Many of those interviewed mentioned the heightened sense of despair and hopelessness they see in families today, compared to 15 or 20 years ago. This was often blamed on the effects of substance abuse and poverty.

The new welfare reform legislation in the United States of America has affected all those who work with poor families of young children. As mothers have begun to leave welfare and return to work, the need for affordable childcare at each of the sites has become critical.

Additional needs created by the effects of welfare reform legislation are entry-level jobs that pay a liveable wage and job training programmes. Many of those interviewed talked about the general decline in educational standards and the fact that many mothers returning to work lack marketable skills and a basic academic background. It was also noted by some that, in the effort to move mothers of young children off welfare, the needs of their children often get overlooked. Busy parents have little time and energy to devote to parent-child activities at home and only a small percentage of parents volunteer at their children's childcare centres. In the struggle to meet day to day demands, there is scant attention focused on improving parenting skills.



USA, High/Scope

* Epstein AS, Montie J & Weikart DP (2002), *Supporting families with young children, the High/Scope Parent-to-Parent dissemination project*, Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation No. 13; Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (see page 59).

Nurturing children

Jean D Griffith

This extract is from a tracer study of the Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) in Trinidad. The study looked at the lives of 79 Trinidadians in their 20s around 10 years after half of them had particpated in the ADP, and looked particularly at the effects of the programme on parenting, nurturing and childrearing in general.

The ADP grew out of the early experiences of Servol (Service Volunteered for All) in the 1970s when it ran courses to impart skills to adolescents and prepare them for the world of work. Although skills were acquired, the young people had difficulty in holding down jobs because of their own attitudes to life and work which were a consequence of their early life experiences.

Since the early 1980s, young people applying to Servol are required to participate in the ADP before undertaking a skills training course. During the three-month course the 16 to 19 year olds are helped to better understand themselves; to better handle their emotions and everyday problems; to become more enlightened, better equipped and more responsible parents; and to become motivated to equip themselves academically and/or with marketable skills. The ADP is available in some 20 centres throughout the country and modified versions have been introduced to some secondary schools and other institutions.

Among the study respondents, a principal area of concern was the nurturing of their children. In general, respondents were in contact with their children and made efforts to provide the kind of support that would enhance their children's well-being.

This was evident among all respondents, whether they were former Servol trainees or in the comparison group. This was also observed irrespective of gender and the community setting. In most cases, respondents said that they lived with their children. In the few exceptional cases where they did not share the same residence, there still appeared to be genuine concern for the welfare of the children and attempts were made to maintain contact and provide support.

Whether from the group of former trainees or the comparison group, respondents revealed that they had devoted a considerable amount of time to their children, particularly during infancy. This was especially the case for the female respondents. Moreover, both groups of respondents recognised that they had to make sacrifices, particularly with respect to their leisure time activities outside of the home. Both groups reported that they had had problems with the health of their infants. Respondents also talked of the financial challenges that were more likely to occur as their children grew older.

In order to overcome challenges, financial ones in particular, reference was made to a number of strategies that included looking for work, relying upon divine help, and becoming self-sufficient and resourceful. The latter was the strategy adopted by some male respondents who were former Servol trainees and who sought to become entrepreneurs in order to overcome financial difficulties that threatened their livelihood and that of their offspring.

Overall, there was a clear recognition that parenting was an arduous task that required parents to demonstrate a great deal of responsibility in nurturing their children. Nonetheless, there was general agreement that parenting was a pleasant experience that had to be embraced and pursued diligently. Mention was made of close interactions between

Apprentices and children in the carpentry workshop. Photo: Servol

respondents and their children, and reciprocal processes of interactions through such activities as singing, playing, touching and cuddling.

Among the respondents, there was general consensus that the ADP had at least reinforced the virtues associated with the task of parenting. In several cases, they felt that the ADP enhanced their parenting skills. For instance, they did things such as getting their children more involved in recreational activities. They also found that the exposure to the ADP enabled them to be more patient and attentive to the children and, as a consequence, enhanced their parent-child relationships. One respondent noted that the ADP

> *...made me more aware of particular areas of my life. It reinforced for me that a person has the power to instil knowledge in another individual's life. I consider parenting to be a privilege and an honour.*

The programme disseminated information that was relevant and was of assistance in taking care of children. In general, the ADP made a difference in parenting skills and provided a basis for ensuring that trainees were well prepared for their responsibilities as parents.

One male respondent acknowledged that the parenting course had a significant impact on him:

> *If the ADP was not there, I do not know how I would be looking at life today. ADP taught me self-awareness. What you are for, what you are not. I teach what I learn from ADP. Every youth in Junior Secondary School should be exposed to this programme. Most people who pass through ADP are different up to today.*

Another said,

> *The parenting course made me have respect for my parents and realise that it is not easy to bring up children. Even when I have arguments with my parents, I remember that they made me and that I must have respect for them.*

One female respondent said that because she had her son when she attended the ADP, 'the parenting course was relevant and helped me to better understand him'. It should be noted that some former trainees indicated that they did not appreciate the full impact of the parenting course when it was being taught. This was because some of them were not sexually active or were not thinking about forming relationships. A male respondent expressed the wish to be able to participate in the course at this stage in his life since he would appreciate it more fully now.

* Griffith JD (2002), *To handle life's challenges: a tracer study of Servol's Adolescent Development Programme in Trinidad*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 16 (see page 59).

What happened to the children?

Roli Degazon-Johnson

Jamaica: Teenage Mothers programme
Storytime for toddlers; the breadfruit tree providing shade.

This article has been adapted from a tracer study' of the Teenage Mothers Project that was based in May Pen in the rural Jamaican parish of Clarendon where there was a high rate of teenage pregnancy. The project operated from 1986 to 1996 and had three overall objectives: to decrease the number and frequency of teenage pregnancies in and around Clarendon; to address the development and training of the teenage mothers; and to lessen the likelihood of repeat pregnancies, thereby improving the life chances of the young child. The study was a follow-up to an earlier piece of research that traced the impact of the project on a sample of 10 mothers and children who were participants between 1986 and 1989, and compared these with ten other mother and child pairs who had not been in the project.

The Teenage Mothers Project (TMP) tracer study followed up on an earlier study that concluded that the children under TMP care not only did much better than the control children, but were performing well by any standard.

An important objective of the tracer study has been to determine the extent to which the early developmental difference noted in that first study may have been sustained, given the natural impact of environment, schooling and the fact that the TMP children would have left the TMP environment when they were aged three or four years, despite occasional home visits that continued afterwards.

The principal instrument used to assess whether the difference has been sustained was the School Performance Report, which comprised the final page of the children's questionnaire and which was completed in the interview with each child's teacher. Eighteen of these reports were completed. The two that were not completed were for Paprika, the infant, and Vanilla, whose school in Florida had not returned her form. To some extent, the reports cannot be said to have the standardised base of a research instrument because different teachers could have given different values to the questions and assessments. However, teacher responses are considered a valuable component of

the earlier research and as a result, their use in this study has validity.

The teachers were all asked to score their student's academic achievement on the basis of a scale from five to one, where five is 'excellent' and one is 'weak' and the results confirm the findings of the earlier testing. In fact, they say more: not only did the early stimulation programme component of the TMP daycare put the babies ahead of their peers developmentally, but this superior performance has been sustained to the upper levels of Primary and All Age schooling.

Special note must be taken of the fact that at this stage in schooling in Jamaica, young adolescent males are known to 'fall off' in their performance when compared to girls. However, there is no difference in the performance of the four TMP boys in the sample when compared to the girls, which is remarkable!

Teacher interviews for several of the children revealed emerging leadership skills as well as outstanding language abilities (even if this sometimes presents a problem for a teacher in a class of 50+ who says the student chats **too much**):

She is very articulate, speaks well. She displays leadership skills, but tends to chat.

She has leadership skills. She can be depended on to organise the class.

There were also children in the comparison group with satisfactory performances. However, in two cases, teachers could identify nothing outstanding about the student. In addition, the teachers of other students said:

She is inclined to provoke other children. She does not settle to her work.

He keeps on hitting and fighting the other children.

He hardly made one know he was in class.

The report of the original research refers to the rigid context of the traditional classroom as having a negative impact on TMP children (and, no doubt, all children). This negative impact can only have been diminished by the strong developmental base the children received in the early stimulation programme and by the continuing influence of one other variable – the mother. The single variable that would have continued to influence the TMP child and enable good to excellent academic achievement in all cases but one, would have been the TMP mother, doubtless encouraging, insisting and motivating her child to perform well in school, to read, to attend school regularly. Apart from the early stimulation programme intervention, no variable can have created such a marked impact and contrast to the comparison group's academic performance as that of the TMP mother herself.

* Degazon-Johnson R (2001), *A new door opened: a tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica,* Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 13 (see page 58).

Jamaica: Roving Caregivers programme
Caregiver on homevisit.
Photo: © Karin Alsbirk/UNICEF

Gender differences in personality development

Anne Njenga & Margaret Kabiru

This article has been extracted from a tracer study' that looks at the effects of training for preschool teachers on the children they have cared for in the Embu district of Kenya. Preschool teacher training in Embu District is carried out by the District Centre for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) Embu, part of a national network (the National Centre for Early Childhood Education – NACECE). Embu District was selected for this study because it has a fairly homogenous rural community with a varied climate and environment. The two year DICECE programme provides in-service and on the job training covering child development, health and nutrition, ECD curriculum, and so on.

Most respondents were of the opinion that girls have better developed personalities than boys. They said that the girls are more disciplined, respectable, reliable, honest, dependable and trustworthy. One of the focus groups of teachers had this to say:

> *Girls are more trusted and reliable than the boys. In this school, we normally depend more on girl prefects because they are more reliable.*

Much of the credit for better personality development among the girls was given to the mothers. The respondents argued that girls are at home with their mothers most of the time and the mothers spend a lot of time counselling them. In addition, most of the mothers are good role models for their girls. The girls were said to attend church more regularly than the boys, and in church they are taught how to lead good moral lives.

The boys, on the other hand, lack good role models. The majority of the fathers are not often available to mould the character of their sons. A good number drink heavily and smoke in the presence of their sons. Their sons tend to copy their fathers, hence engaging in truancy from a very early age.

The head teachers also complained that many parents allow their sons to roam about and do not insist on them engaging in productive work while at home. This freedom makes the boys more vulnerable to bad peer influence, hence their poor personality development. Girls, on the other hand, are expected to be at home most of the time and to engage in productive work. This leaves them with very little time to engage in undesirable behaviours.

The role of the school

The majority of the groups attributed the good personality development of pupils to well-behaved teachers and head teachers whom the pupils emulate. The participants also emphasised that the teachers provide guidance and counselling for the pupils. This helps the pupils to acquire good morals and character. These responses are significant in that the teachers are viewed by all as the citadel of moral training and character development, providing important role models for pupils. Even the parents appear to

Kenya. Mwana Mwende project
Active learning in a preschool

delegate this most important responsibility to the teachers. If it is true that the teacher remains the most important factor for influencing the overall growth and development of pupils, it is no wonder the parents were extremely critical of teachers who are not committed to their work and who drink and smoke in the presence of their pupils.

Poor discipline at home

Poor discipline at home was yet another important factor cited for poor personality development. The majority of the participants said that in some homes, the parents provide little moral guidance to their children and do not bother to instil firm discipline in them. They leave the children to do what they want, including roaming about in the markets and shops. This makes the children vulnerable to bad peer influence and bad habits.

The participants underscored the role of fathers in the moral development of their children. Their failure to provide good role models, guidance and counselling was said to have an adverse effect on the personality development of their children, particularly the boys. The participants were very concerned about the declining role of fathers in providing moral guidance for their children.

The issue of disciplining children has become a serious problem for most parents today because of the social changes that have taken place in Kenya. Most of the parents have been caught up in the web of cultural transition where there are no longer clearly defined values and moral codes of behaviour that should be instilled in children and young people. Lifestyles have changed tremendously and some of the value systems that governed families in the traditional society are no longer applicable. Parents are today increasingly being left to define their own value systems and the moral codes of behaviour that they think are good for their children. This is a difficult task. In addition, different families end up emphasising different values and moral codes of behaviour, a practice that tends to cause confusion for their children when they socialise with their peers.

* Njenga A & Kabiru M (2001), *In the web of cultural transition: a tracer study of children in Embu District, Kenya*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 14 (see page 58).

Community Mothers

Brenda Molloy

This extract is from a report of a seven year follow-up study of mothers and children who participated in the Community Mothers Programme (CMP) in Ireland.[1] The CMP is a home visiting support programme for first time (and some second time) parents of children aged 0 to 24 months who live in mainly disadvantaged areas. The programme aims to support and aid the development of parenting skills, thereby enhancing parents' confidence and self-esteem. It is delivered by non-professional volunteer mothers known as Community Mothers, who are trained and supported by Family Development Nurses.

Over half the Community Mothers gave altruistic reasons as their motive for joining the Programme, with only a small minority giving personal gain as their main reason for joining. This need to help others appears to be rooted in culture, tradition and in working class experience and involves caring based on empathy rather than on doing good.

The majority of the Community Mothers were supported in their volunteering by husbands, children, relatives and friends who could see the value of helping others and who also felt that the Community Mother might have a need for developing an identity outside of the home. The Programme appeared to be mobilising not only the 'natural helpers' but also new helpers who, through their involvement in the Programme, felt confident about getting involved in other community endeavours.

A number of Community Mothers mentioned how they felt when they were first time parents; they remembered the difficulties they experienced in bringing up their own children and the loneliness and isolation they had felt at this time. For those Community Mothers who talked about the need to meet people, or who said they had time to spare, or who identified with the aims of the Programme, there was also an expressed desire for independence that comes through participation in the Programme. They were often looking for a sense of personal identity outside of their home and family, so that participation could function as a diversion or a therapy. As a person with such a need said,

> *I was busy at home but I wasn't meeting anybody. My life wasn't going anywhere and I had lost my self-confidence. I wanted to meet people.*

A number of parents who had themselves been visited later became Community Mothers because they were motivated by a desire to help others in the same way that they felt helped. As one such woman commented:

> *I had the Programme myself and I liked getting praise for the things I did even when nobody else praised me.*

I decided that other people should get the same, so the reason I am involved is to give back what I got out of it.

The Community Mothers saw themselves relating to parents as 'ordinary' women and not as 'mini professionals'. Being able to share their own difficulties in rearing their own children with the Programme parents may be another factor in the development of a positive relationship because Community Mothers, unlike professionals, do not have to remain objective with families. As one Community Mother commented:

You can understand when the mother says, 'I feel like strangling her.' You can say, 'Yes I know. I have felt like that myself.'

Involvement in the programme affected the Community Mothers in several ways. They had developed friendships with their colleagues, the social milieu of the project being a source of benefit. For a minority, their relationship with their husband had improved, with the relationship now being felt to be more respectful with more open communication. Three-quarters of the Community Mothers stated that their relationship with their children had improved because they were now more aware of their children's needs, listened to them more, understood them better and had more patience with them.

The majority of Community Mothers also noticed differences in themselves, particularly increased self-confidence and greater self-worth. This appeared to be related to the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of socially useful skills. It also appeared to be related to the role of women in society with housewives seeing themselves as having low status. Over half stated that they now felt more in control of their lives, that they could now deal with those in authority better because of increased self-confidence and knowledge, and that they felt they now had more power in relation to their community and they could influence the community in their role as a Community Mother. Only a minority felt the need to get involved in pressure groups and/or political organisations.

The volunteers in the Programme are all mothers. One school of thought sees this as negative. They would see women as being asked to shoulder the main burden of care within the community both as kin and as volunteers. Others would argue that community action is an area particularly central in the struggle for women's emancipation and would stress not only the possibility of achieving specific targets but also the importance of process. In becoming involved with community action, women begin to challenge not only the social definitions of their role but also internalised perceptions that may serve to limit their self-expectations. So it could be argued that women's voluntary action is motivated by a feminist awareness and is the creator of a wider awareness. ○

* Molloy B (2002), *Still going strong: a tracer study of the Community Mothers Programme, Dublin, Ireland*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 17 (see page 59).

A young mother learning in her own home.

Can Following Footsteps affect policy?

Ruth N Cohen

This article was compiled from interviews and conversations conducted during the Following Footsteps tracer studies workshop, Jamaica, April 2002.

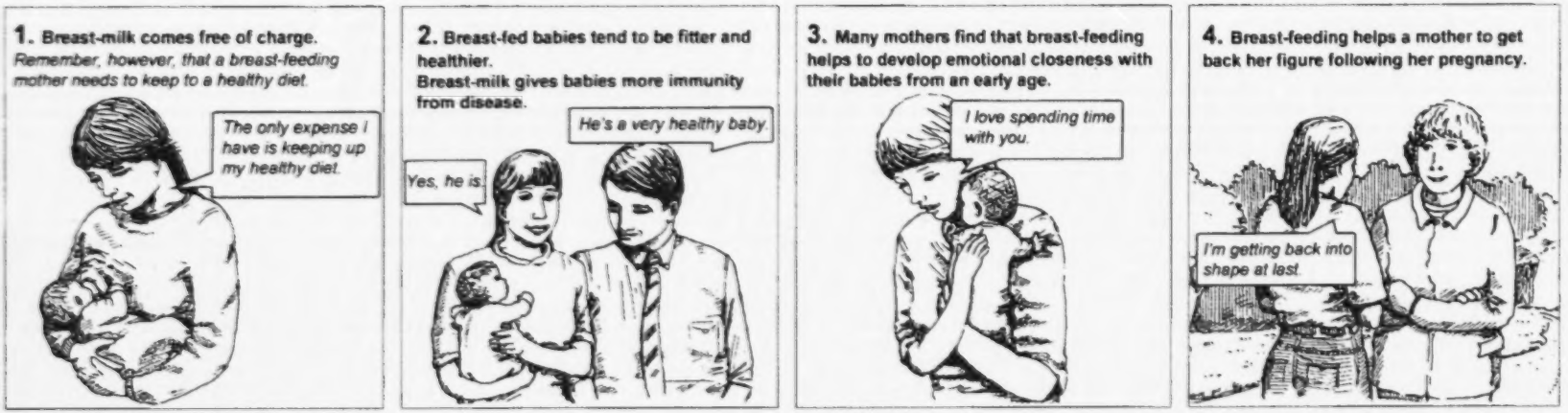
Is it possible that a study that follows up former participants of an early childhood programme can have an impact on policy – within its own environment or even further afield? Here we look at four examples that can help us to understand the relationships between the original programme, the choices that were made about how to conduct a study, decisions about what elements to include in it, and the impact that could be made on policy.

The examples are from very different settings, from very different programmes, and concern four studies that are very different from one another. There is the 'grand-daddy' of all ECD follow-up studies, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study in the USA that is a longstanding randomised controlled research programme. In Ireland, the follow-up in the Community Mothers Programme is also based on a randomised control group. The tracer study in Kenya was large-scale, included almost one thousand children, and used a comparison group; while in Botswana the tracer study simply followed up all the children it could find and, mostly because of inadequate record keeping, was more qualitative than quantitative and included no comparison group.

One caveat or word of warning: it is almost impossible to attribute changes in local or national policy to any one single cause – there are always other intervening factors and variables. But there can be little doubt that in three of the cases discussed here, the results of the studies have contributed to changes in thinking and, very possibly, to shifts in the allocation of resources.

USA: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study

This longitudinal research study was, according to David P Weikart:


1. Breast-milk comes free of charge.
Remember, however, that a breast-feeding mother needs to keep to a healthy diet.
The only expense I have is keeping up my healthy diet.
2. Breast-fed babies tend to be fitter and healthier.
Breast-milk gives babies more immunity from disease.
He's a very healthy baby.
Yes, he is.
3. Many mothers find that breast-feeding helps to develop emotional closeness with their babies from an early age.
I love spending time with you.
4. Breast-feeding helps a mother to get back her figure following her pregnancy.
I'm getting back into shape at last.

Ireland: Community Mothers Programme
Teaching materials for promoting breast-feeding.

quite accidental. We were setting up a preschool programme in 1962 to find out if it would make a difference in the lives of the children, but there were local experts who felt it would harm the children and that was the challenge. That changed it from being only a service to a research programme. There was a population of 500 families and we selected from them disadvantaged families who were suitable for the programme, but there were too many and we made a random selection. So we had a group of participants and a control group.

Five cohorts of children were followed up from age seven and at intervals since – the current follow-up is age 40. The first study was on programme effects at third grade. When the researchers saw how many differences there were between the groups of children (programme and control), the objective of the later studies has been to influence policy.

The initial target was local decision makers and High/Scope went directly to local business people and local leaders on the premise that if they were in support of it that would influence policy. The work has had influence on local schools, at state level, at national level and beyond. It has been used extensively to support preschool programmes at state level, to justify universal kindergarten. In fact, it has been used for many purposes that were not part of the study, but which are intended to improve opportunities for children.

Ireland: Community Mothers Programme (CMP)

The CMP is part of a statutory local health system. At the end of the initial phase (1988 to 1990) the programme commissioned an independent group to carry out a randomised controlled study when the children were one year old. Results were encouraging:

programme families had a better uptake of immunisation; children and family had better diets; mothers' self-esteem was higher. The objective had been to find results, to sustain the programme, not so much to impact policy.

Brenda Molloy, Director of the CMP, explains:

> *We felt that the study was important in its own right, and we made an informed choice to publish internationally in recognised peer reviewed journals. We did a follow-up when the children were seven years old because we were convinced that rigorous evaluation was important, and we wanted to strengthen the original findings.*

By the time the study[1] was published in 1993, parent support was becoming important and from about 1994 the CMP started to be mentioned in policy documents in Ireland. As Brenda says:

> *It was as if people were beginning to understand the importance of peer-led intervention programmes. Gradually we began to identify key people in our system who should be targeted, those with resources and/or influence. I began to meet them, to converse with them regularly. I also became more strategic in presenting things to people, not just sending them reports on paper.*

The programme was also being mentioned internationally through write-ups in the media, and was influencing policy further afield. Brenda recalls a visit from a local official who had gone to Australia to find out about early childhood programmes and care and support and had been told, 'I think you need to go home'. As she says 'It was only by going outside that he realised he had something on his own doorstep'.

Kenya: Embu District Centre for Early Childhood Education

The study in Embu District proposed to find out whether there were differences between children who had been cared for in preschools with trained teachers and children who had been with untrained teachers. Three cohorts were traced seven, eight and nine years after leaving preschool, in 18 schools. Some differences were found but, as Anne Njenga, the lead researcher says:

> *We have learned we must improve our primary schools, we must improve transition from preschool to primary school, and it is time that we address this issue of what makes a quality primary school. The problem is that most of the parents recognise the problems but can't do anything about it.*
>
> *The teachers know very little about the children, maybe the head teacher thinks he knows a lot, but when we came up with figures of repetition and drop-out rates, most of them were shocked, they never knew, they saw children as figures, as numbers, no-one ever asked how many of the children in class 1 in 1990 are in class 8 eight years later – no-one knew that.*
>
> *Only when we came up with our report they said, 'I think we have to start talking with one another, to try to evaluate.' So studies like this can be very useful.*

Anne knows why the teachers, education officers and communities are taking notice of the results. It is because the researchers ensured that communities were aware of the study and why it was being done, as were the district administrators so that when the researchers went back:

> *They know about it. We have been able to disseminate the results and it has been accepted because they knew about it from the beginning. That is a very important aspect of policy change.*

Botswana: Bokamoso Preschool Programme

The original tracer study[2] was carried out 1993-1995 and followed up all the San children who had been to the Bokamoso preschools who could be found. The objective had been to assess and improve the programme, not to impact policy, but the results showed that there were several aspects of the primary school system that needed attention. However, according to Willemien le Roux and Gaolatlhe Eirene Thupe, the report has never made an impact in terms of policy, even though it was sent to all the people they knew who were involved in education.

There seem to be a number of reasons for this. For one thing, after sending the report to officials, they never followed that up with personal communications or visits. For another, the study had never been officially sanctioned. It was Willemien who found out the main reason:

> *It was at a dance and I was dancing with a high-ranking government official who told me the government would never take the study seriously 'because you did not follow the communications channels for communities set up by the government'. So the report was rejected because of the way we undertook the research. Yet we knew that if the people had been asked in the official way, we would never have been able to get the data we required. The lesson we have learned from this is that, if we wanted to do another study, we would need to do it in parallel with official procedures.*

The 'magic' ingredient

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned here is that, if we wish to influence policy, the original programme must be strong and of good quality, and the research process needs to be transparent as well as rigorous – which is not necessarily the same as academically respectable.

The importance of knowing the right people to approach, and the right ways of approaching them cannot be underestimated.

And then there is the matter of figures. Anne Njenga believes that:

> *As you do research you have to be very flexible, there are issues that you have to capture if you are going to convince people. You have to have figures. We traced the children for nine years so they could see how attendance and results went down and down. If you did it for just one year I don't think you could convince them.*

For David Weikart and Brenda Molloy, the figures are Dollars and Euros. In fact, David says that:

> *If there can be said to be one 'magic' ingredient that has influenced policy, it has been the cost-benefit study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study.*

Ireland: Community Mothers Programme

> *Everyone has warm feelings about children, but because we tracked them over the years, we could calculate the costs of what had happened to them – school, welfare, prison system, extra services – and show the differences between the two groups in the study.*

As in the USA, in Ireland people want to see value for money. Brenda has given presentations on the costs of the programme which have helped people to understand that 'It does not take a huge amount of money to provide this support'.

Both of them agree that you cannot calculate all the hidden costs, such as the costs of volunteers. But David's advice is that if you want to do a costs analysis then use an economist: some of this work is 'More complex than a human mind can calculate'. ○

notes

1. Johnson Z, Howell F & Molloy B (1993), 'Community Mothers Programme: randomised controlled trial of non-professional intervention in parenting' in *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 306, pp 1449-52.
2. See page 22, 'The story behind the story: tracing San children in Botswana'.

The implications of tracer studies for programme development

Henriette Heimgaertner

The author is a Programme Specialist at the Bernard van Leer Foundation, with responsibility for developing programmes of support for early childhood projects in a number of countries in both Central and Western Europe. In this article, she gives two examples of how tracer studies allow us to understand more about how projects impact over time on children and other participants, and thereby help us to improve project design by linking it to longer term outcomes.

Developing a programme of early childhood projects that aim to enhance young children's chances to succeed in life is a complex, non-linear and dynamic process that involves a variety of factors. These include:

- the exploration of life circumstances of children and families;
- needs analyses;
- the availability and quality of ECD and family support services;
- the social climate for children and families;
- the availability of research findings on innovative and effective concepts and practices;
- the organisational and outreach capacities of local partner organisations; and
- the opportunities to influence policy.

During the process of programme development, we obviously have to make many decisions and strategic choices and to do so we need information. Here, the findings of tracer studies have a special importance because they add new factors to do with impact over time, and because they help to show how programming can take these new factors into account. This article analyses the findings of five of the tracer studies using the lens of programme development. It is organised around two 'programmatic landmarks' that the tracer studies highlight. Programmatic landmarks are essentially timings or opportunities that the tracer studies show to be especially significant if projects are to be effective. The two examples discussed here are: the most opportune time to offer support for parents; and the time of transition from preschool to primary school.

Programmatic landmark 1: the key time for parent support

Parent support and parenting programmes are common features in projects that the Foundation supports. Reviewing the projects that we support shows that some focus on parenting at the time that parents are preparing for the birth of their first child; some on teenagers who will be parents in the future, and may be preparing for marriage; and some on parents at the time when their children enter daycare or preschool.

Three tracer studies looked at the impact of projects that focused on parenting, one each from Jamaica, Ireland and Trinidad. The projects centred respectively on teenage mothers, first time mothers and teenagers who were yet to become parents. All three programmes embarked on a comprehensive training programme for mothers and future parents; and this encompassed not only information on childrearing and child development issues, but also life and personal skills. In addition, the projects in Jamaica and Trinidad included vocational training; while in the case of Ireland, many mothers went on to further professional training as a result of their involvement in the programme. All three programmes used non-

directive, empowering ways of programme delivery; and all three provided a range of options for programme participants rather than instructing them on what to do and how to behave. In addition, the programmes reinforced the existing strengths of participants and this led to sustained life management skills and positive parenting behaviour.

Good self-esteem, positive attitudes and purpose in life, good communication skills and engagement with and for the community: these seem to be essential qualities for successfully raising children. The Jamaican study is the most outspoken on these notions, drawing as it does on the mother-child relationship, how children engaged with their peers, and their attitudes to schooling and school achievement. Interestingly, programme outcomes were not limited to the children directly involved in the programme but extended to all subsequent children of mothers enrolled in the programme. In addition, the programme led to fewer siblings in the case of Jamaica and possibly also in the case of Trinidad, although the differences between the programme and the comparison group were not as marked here as in Jamaica.

Overall, the findings indicate that investment in young or future parents pays off and, even more important, that benefits are sustained well into the secondary school years of the children. In personal terms, enrolment in each of the programmes was a crucial turning point in the lives of many of the young parents:

> *It was the best thing that happened to me … life was not at an end*
> (a teenage mother from Jamaica)

> *If the programme was not there, I do not know how I would be looking at life today*
> (a participant from Trinidad)

> *I liked getting praise for the things I did even when nobody else praised me*
> (a programme mother turned Community Mother from Ireland)

Given such clear, positive and lasting outcomes, it is important for us in the Foundation to take a closer look at components such as the structure, content, implementation and timelines of the projects. In Ireland, outcomes were achieved on the basis of a maximum of 12 one hour visits in the year after the baby's birth. Moreover, the programme used volunteer women from the community for programme delivery who were supported by a small team of community nurses. In Jamaica, teenage mothers were enrolled in the programme for approximately 18 months, which included their pregnancy and a two-month break after the birth. While the mothers were following their course work, the babies were in a daycare provision staffed with caregivers trained by the programme. In Trinidad, the adolescent training programme lasted for 14 weeks, usually followed by a vocational skills training programme. What seems to have been significant was not so much the duration of the intervention, but choosing the right time. This appears to be when new parents are having, or are about to have their first child.

Programmatic landmark 2: the continuum between preschool and primary school

The creation of, and support to, quality preschool services has been one of the mainstays of the Foundation's programming over the years, frequently concentrating on helping countries, regions and communities to build up preschool services from scratch. One key concept here is child-centred learning that encompasses social and emotional development along with the development of cognitive training. In addition, principles of education for diversity inform projects that serve populations which include migrant children; while projects also provide culturally sensitive facilities for children who are members of minority groups.

In many ways, two projects – one from Botswana and one from Kenya – are representative of the kinds of preschool programming that fit the Foundation's approaches and aspirations. Tracer studies in these projects looked into the impact of preschool education by tracing children during their primary school years, reviewing not just primary school performance, but also the ways in which children were developing as people. In both cases we can see that children found the transition from preschool to primary school difficult, and that this resulted in absenteeism and sometimes high dropout and repetition rates.

Trinidad & Tobago: Child Welfare League

The President of the Child Welfare League holding a baby at the Port of Spain centre.

Why was this so? What was happening? It's very clear that learning methods in preschools took the development of children into account; that the physical environments allowed for movement, play and quiet activities; and that preschool teachers were trained to provide a caring, safe and stimulating environment for children. Also, there was space for parents to be involved and parents supported the preschools in many practical ways, not just by paying fees. Children coming from this sort of background found it hard to cope with formal, stiff learning environments and the harsh discipline that was at times exercised by primary school teachers. This was exacerbated by a lack of learning materials, especially those in the mother tongue of the children. Preschools often had other advantages over primary schools as well – for example, that preschool teachers were recruited from the children's own communities and that the home language of the children was usually spoken. In contrast, primary schools used the language of the majority population. The consequence was that children transferring to primary school experienced failure in the first or second grade in Botswana, and in the fourth grade in Kenya – the time when English becomes the language of instruction.

Interestingly, a participant at the Following Footsteps tracer studies workshop in Jamaica portrayed a similar situation in India:

> *In the crèches and preschools, the children really feel that they are loved, that their teachers care, they are from the same community. In the primary school the teachers are not from their community, some children survive the primary system, the ones who get some reinforcement.*

Moreover, particularly in the case of minority children, the different cultural background of the primary school teachers was the source of many misunderstandings and frustrations for children and parents alike. This is most evident in the case of the San children. The Ministry of Education of Botswana deployed primary school teachers to work in San settlements. They received no prior training in minority languages, cultural knowledge, the lifestyle of children or childrearing practices and this had serious

repercussions on the retention rates of San children in school. One example centres on the status of the child in the San culture: San children are brought up as equal to adults, hence parents rarely resort to corporal punishment, yet physical forms of punishment were widespread in the Botswana school system. A second example centres on the fact that primary school teachers did not speak the mother tongue of the children. This made children (and their parents) feel that the San culture was not valued by the teachers and also resulted in teachers using physical punishment as a way to discipline children. The attitudes of some teachers may also have exacerbated the problem: working in minority settings with children they regarded as inferior was often seen as demotion by teachers. This led to discrimination and a loss of motivation, expressed as a wish to be posted elsewhere as soon as the opportunity arose.

The problem of easy and effective transition might seem to be eased in those countries where preschools and primary schools are housed in the same compound, but this apparently does not necessarily foster cooperation between preschool and primary school teachers. There often seems to be an inability on the part of teachers and school administrators to build bridges between pre and primary schools, to take the best of both and devise transitions that ensure that the gains young children make in preschool are built on in primary school. On the positive side, examples from programmes elsewhere suggest that parents who have been involved in the preschool years of their children have successfully insisted that the best practices in preschools are incorporated into the primary school system.

But, as these two tracer studies show, many of the investments in the quality of preschool education and in the training of preschool teachers can count for little as children move into primary school. Both studies found a positive correlation between the training of preschool teachers and the quality of preschool education, but investment in preschool training does not guarantee sustained school achievement for children. A key factor here is the overall quality of the primary school environment: the commitment and skill of the director of the primary school appeared to play an important role in defining the academic standing of the school and in the provision of an enabling learning environment for children. A second key factor is appropriate training for primary school teachers so that they recognise the continuing importance of child-centred approaches and methods. What is clear is that, to sustain the effects of preschool education throughout the primary school years and on into further schooling, needs both a well-run school and well-trained teachers.

The lessons we can draw for programme development are that:

1. the preschool and primary school years have to be experienced as a continuum by children;
2. training for early years teaching must also include primary school teachers, while special managerial and pedagogic training needs to be provided for head teachers/school directors;
3. an introduction to the language of the primary school must start during the preschool years so that children have a good grasp of the majority language when they enter the new school system;
4. likewise, the primary school must ensure literacy in both the children's mother tongue and the language of the majority population; and
5. the cultural values and practices of minority groups must be introduced into the curriculum of the primary school system.

Conclusions

Overall, these tracer studies allow us to review programme impact over time. They also give us insights into the impact of monitoring and evaluation on programme evolution and development. For the San children this has resulted in the training of primary school teachers about what is important in early childhood development, and in training for teachers on cultural diversity. More recently, programme planning in Kenya now includes appropriate training of primary school teachers and shifting their focus to include both preschools and primary schools.

Following Footsteps publications

Published by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in its series Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections.

Degazon-Johnson R (2001), *A new door opened: a tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 13

The study traced the impact of the Teenage Mothers Project on a sample of 10 mothers and children who were participants between 1986 and 1989, and compared these with ten other mother and child pairs who had not been in the project. Significant differences were found between the two groups of mothers and the two groups of children.

Njenga A & Kabiru M (2001), *In the web of cultural transition: a tracer study of children in Embu District, Kenya*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 14

This study looks at the effects of training for preschool teachers on the children they have cared for. Three cohorts of children who entered primary school in 1991, 1992 and 1993 were tracked through primary school to the classes they were in in 1999 – about half of these children had been cared for by trained preschool teachers, the others had been with untrained preschool teachers. Several benefits of trained preschool teachers were found, and children who had been cared for by them made the transition to primary school more successfully. Children's overall performances were found to be considerably affected by several factors: the academic rating of the primary schools; high wastage in the form of absenteeism, repetition and dropout rates; and non-school related factors such as alcohol, drugs, child employment, and changing lifestyles.

le Roux W (2002), *The challenges of change: a tracer study of San preschool children in Botswana*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 15

The main body of this report is based on a study carried out during 1993-1995 that traced San children of primary school age who had participated in the Bokamoso Preschool Programme. It also includes an update to 2001 containing additional background information and new findings. These hunter-gatherer people no longer have access to their old territories or the skills to earn a livelihood. They face this situation with a sense of hopelessness and despair, unemployment is high and alcoholism is a serious problem. In the formal education system, the San children meet a different culture and have to cope with conflicting expectations and norms, as well as unfamiliar languages. Despite all this, the study found that the children who had attended preschools were mostly still in school, many parents were supportive of formal education, some head teachers were trying to adapt the school to the realities of the community, and many of the children believed to have dropped out were, in fact, still in school.

Griffith JD (2002), *To handle life's challenges: a tracer study of Servol's Adolescent Development Programme in Trinidad*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 16

This study looks at the effects of the Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) on a sample of 40 young men and women some 10 years after their participation, and compares these with another group of 39 individuals with similar characteristics. The analysis was based on the criteria that are central to the ADP. The results showed that former trainees had benefited from the programme at a number of different levels. There were some similarities in findings between the ADP group and the comparison group and differences with respect to levels of self-esteem and childbearing.

Molloy B (2002), *Still going strong: a tracer study of the Community Mothers Programme, Dublin, Ireland*, Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 17

This is a report of a seven year follow-up study of mothers and children who participated in a home visiting programme during the first 12 months of the children's lives. It follows an earlier study, when the children were one year old, that found significant beneficial effects for both mothers and children when compared to a control group. The report describes the origins, development and implementation of the programme, motivation of and effects on the women who implement it, and three earlier pieces of research. Findings in the follow-up study were very positive for the mothers, the children and for subsequent children.

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Published by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 600 North River Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-2898, USA

Epstein AS, Montie J & Weikart DP (2002), *Supporting families with young children, the High/Scope Parent-to-Parent dissemination project*, Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation No. 13, Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation

This publication describes the genesis and development from the 1960s of the work that became the Parent-to-Parent dissemination project – a multi-site, community-based parent support initiative from 1978 to 1984. In 1998 a study followed up four of the original sites to find organisational traces of the principles and strategies. Although none of the original programmes are still in existence, many former participants remain active in the same or similar fields. The report includes conclusions concerning the effectiveness and potentials of family support services.

Forthcoming from the Bernard van Leer Foundation:

Levin-Rozalis M & Shafran N, *A sense of belonging: a tracer study of Almaya's Parents' Cooperative Kindergarten, Israel* (to be published early 2003 as Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No. 19)

The study has looked at former participants in a Parents' Cooperative Kindergarten programme that was operated by Almaya, an association that works with families who came to Israel from Ethiopia. The programme operated in two neighbourhoods of Beer-Sheva and the study has compared responses from former child participants (now in their early teens) with children of Ethiopian origin from the same neighbourhoods who were not in the programme, as well as with children of non-Ethiopian origin in a different town. It concludes that the children from the intervention group have acquired many of the tools that are necessary to better integrate into Israeli society.

A report of a tracer study of children and families from the Christian Children's Fund programme in Honduras.

A report of a 20-year follow-up of children and families from the Promesa programme, Colombia.

Cohen RN, *Introducing tracer studies: a guide to implementing tracer studies in early childhood development programmes.*

Winner of the 2002 Poster Competition

India: Growing in the Palami Hills project (Society for Integrated Development of Tribals - SIDT) Tamil Nadu, Madurai.
Senthilkumar and Kattis belong to a village called Chinnoor. They write not only on the slate but also on the rocks on which their village is located.
Photo: M Muthu

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